

# PRIME MINISTER ATAL BIHARI VAJPAYEE

SELECTED SPEECHES

**VOL-I** 

**PUBLICATIONS DIVISION** 

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Volume-I

March 1998 to March 1999

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# PUBLICATIONS DIVISION MINISTRY OF INFORMATION AND BROADCASTING GOVERNMENT OF INDIA CC-0. Nanaji Deshmukh Library, BJP, Jammu. Digitized by eGangotri

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## I National Affairs

### Let Us Look Ahead

YOU HAVE GIVEN your mandate. The President has decided. Your Government has been formed. Now let us get down to work.

The world is rushing ahead. It is time for us to leave our petty disputes and differences behind. It is time, especially, to drop the bitterness of losses and victories in the elections. My Government has begun working and I urge all of you too to get to work.

I urge this specially to those who have been returned to Parliament. I have spent almost all my working life in and around Parliament. My heart breaks when I reflect on what it was meant to be and what we have made of this great national institution. We must once again collectively make it a forum for deliberation and discourse and example of civility, of reasoned debate on people's problems. Therefore, I appeal to Members of Parliament who will be taking their seats soon, millions and millions of people have placed their trust in you, do strive now to make Parliament worthy of those trusting long suffering millions.

And I urge the people too: You are the masters, the Members you have sent are here to deliberate on your behalf. Do not now forget these Members till the next elections. And do not let them forget you

The second point I want to urge is even more elemental: Let us look ahead. Other countries are reaching for the stars. Not just products, but entire technologies break out every other year and are just as swiftly overtaken by still newer ones. This is the world we have to face. We cannot cut ourselves off from this. Those nations that are technologically and economically stronger are dominating the world. None of us can tolerate



Prime Minister Shri Atal Bihari Vajpayee in his office after the CC-6: Walling Beilm CRIPIDPANY, BNF, Yallin Diglize May California

India being consigned to mediocrity. And why should we? We have all the resources we need. India has world-class talent. Indians are in the forefront of new technologies, the world over; in India too, as new avenues have opened up the software industry, space research, new information and communication technologies, and our young women and men have moved in swiftly. That is the way I want all of us to look at the future with confidence.

It is but natural that in the turbulence of world markets, in the new emerging regime of the World Trade Organization (WTO), our principal responsibility should be to safeguard and promote the country's interests. There is no need to be shy in this regard that is what governments, the world over, are pursuing in the era of globalization. Promoting the country's interests, strengthening its own abilities does not mean isolating ourselves from the world. It means meeting its challenges after thorough preparation. And a major part of the preparation, to which my Government is deeply committed, is a speedy internal liberalization of the economy, freeing it from all the growth hindering bureaucratic and governmental controls.

Therefore, let us not fear the new regimes of trade. Let us put them to work. It is right that we should raise our voice when products that are generic to India, such as *haldi* and *basmati*, should be patented abroad. But the real remedy is to take all those initiatives that will enable India and Indians to overtake others in acquiring world-class patents. That is how my government will view the new economic order and that is how I believe all of us should face it.

I am reminded of what Ramakrishna Paramahamsa told an aspirant: Life is like a boat. The natural place for it to be is on water. But one cannot let water enter the boat and drown it. That is what my colleagues and I mean by Swadeshi. The natural place for the country to be is in the world. But we are not to let the powerful currents now rocking world markets to drown us. Instead, we are to put those very currents to work in our favour.

Let us, therefore, make the boat of our national economy stronger and sturdier. Let us do it in the shortest possible time frame by unleashing the productive energies of Indian people. And let us accomplish this challenge by eradicating poverty and unemployment at the earliest. In a word, step over the past and grasp the future.

To do so, there is but one mantra. Let us work together. If we keep holding each other, how can the country progress? Let us break out of this destructive habit. During our glorious freedom struggle, patriotism meant going to jail, it meant struggle and sacrifice. In today's context, patriotism can only be working hard, working honestly and working together. I appeal to one and all, to fellow politicians as well as to ordinary people to rise to this higher challenge of patriotism.

Among the things that keep us from joining hands and working together is the unfortunate turn our public life has taken. Democratic contest has given way to perpetual confrontation. Yet, the very force of circumstances in the nation's polity has created an atmosphere of cooperation and coalition-building. The politics of negativism and untouchability has run its course, our mad race to pull each other down by fair means and foul has sullied the image of India in the eyes of the world. It has spread fear and caste and communal divisiveness in society. I sincerely feel that we, as a nation, must give up this harmful path of confrontation.

Ours is an ancient civilization. It has been built on consensus, on persuasion and not on mere tolerance. It has been built on an active and deep respect for the faiths and practices of all. Our sages say, "Akashaat Patitam Toyam, Yad Gachchati Saagaram, Sarva Devam Namaskaram, Keshavam Pratigachchati" (Just as drops of rain falling on varied places, all gather in streams and flow to the one sea, so also all worship leads to the same Divinity). The Tamil Savant Thirumoolar proclaims in his "Thirumandiram:" Ondre Kulam, Oruvane Devan (We are all of one clan and there is but one God).

In the Indian perspective, this is the only valid meaning of secularism. My Government is unequivocally committed to this CC-0. Nanaji Deshmukh Library, BJP, Jammu: Diglized by Committed to this

concept of secularism. My colleagues and I have been nurtured in this tradition. We treasure it. It is by this tradition that we shall recreate the spirit which was the hallmark of the freedom struggle—persons of all religions, all regions and all professions were working together to create a strong, confident and resurgent India.

As we approach the dawn of a new century and a new millennium, the mission of India's national renewal beckons us all; the Government and the People alike. As the first imperative, we must restore the credibility of public life and public institutions, making them once again reliable and independent pillars of State.

The second key is to mobilize talent at all levels from all corners of society. I still remember the thrill that every Indian felt 50 years ago when our country won Independence. Every Indian felt we were set on a great adventure. And for a while, talent of the highest order was in fact galvanized for reconstructing our country.

That air of excitement and that gathering up of talent is what I want to recreate. My Government shall reach out to talent across the country. It shall strive to create a new work culture, a world-class working environment so that the best remain here to build our country and those who are now working elsewhere return and put their prodigious acumen to work for their country.

While I do not want to talk of policies and programmes today, there are five goals that I do want to place before you. These are close to my heart and these are goals which my Government shall go all out to achieve.

- My Government is determined to take steps which will help us double our food production and make India hunger-free in ten years. It is indeed alarming that the per capita availability of foodgrains, which is already abysmal, has been decreasing. It is a matter of grave concern.
- My Government is committed to rapid expansion and improvement of India's social infrastructure—drinking

water, housing, education, health-care and sanitation. In particular, we shall provide within five years safe drinking water to every settlement in the country.

- My Government is committed to rapid expansion and improvement of India's physical infrastructure—power, oil, petroleum and renewable sources of energy, roads, transport, ports, airports, telecommunications and financial services so that these work both as engines of growth and employment generation.
- My Government shall unveil a National Water Policy so that no water goes waste and also our country which has always revered the sacred rivers, cleans up all its water resources.
- My Government will strive hard to make India a Global Information Technology Power (GITP) specially, make India one of the largest generators and exporters of software in the world within ten years.

In this sacred national mission, I invite the most active participation of our hard-working kisans, workers, teachers, government employees, lawyers, doctors, engineers, traders, businessmen—in short, people in all professions. We shall aim, in particular, at equipping the weakest sections of the society to participate in this adventure. I have in mind especially members of Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes and of Minorities who may be poor. It has been quite rightly said that many have used these sections as vote banks, but they have left their real problems exactly as they were; inadequate education, malnutrition and the rest.

The counter-example, the one I want the country to follow is provided by the life and career of Dr. Baba Saheb Bhim Rao Ambedkar: a benevolent Rajah spots the sparkling talent in this little child; he and others assist the child to study, to struggle, to excel; and see the heights he scaled. A good project was initiated during Shri Rajiv Gandhi's tenure to locate the brightest children from among the poorest sections and to set up the very best schools for them. Like so many good ideas, the scheme

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has languished. I am particularly anxious to revive it and to multiply it twenty-fold.

In many ways the position of women is even more precarious and it is pivotal to our future. A country cannot even be said to be progressing if one-half of its population remains disadvantaged. In any case, it just cannot progress: Every study had identified female literacy, female health as the keys that determine so much else. Doubling female literacy within ten years, vastly improving medical care for daughters and mothers, protecting the self-respect of women, empowering them politically through reservation in Parliament and State Assemblies. These are not just goals that my Government shall work towards. These are goals which I shall personally monitor.

Another major area of focus will be restructuring of Centre-State relations. I am particularly keen to decentralize financial and administrative powers to the States; just as the license-quota Raj choked the initiatives of individuals, centralizing decisions and functioning in Delhi has choked the initiative at all levels of governance.

As a first step, the Government shall urgently devise legal and executive changes so that decisions can be taken directly by the States in regard to sectors such as Power even in regard to Foreign Direct Investment (FDI) upto, say, Rs. 1,500 crore. In such areas, I believe, the task of the Central Government is to lay down guidelines. As long as any proposal conforms to those guidelines, decisions regarding the project are properly within the purview of the States themselves. We will ensure that Chief Ministers and their ministerial colleagues do not have to trudge to Delhi every now and then to seek routine clearances or for unnecessary discussions.

I do want to add one word for our neighbours. One of the fine accomplishments of the last few years is that relations with almost all our neighbours have improved. My Government will strain every nerve to accelerate this trend. We are determined to be friends with all and precisely because we happen to be the larger country, we shall be all the more sensitive to the

aspirations and needs of our neighbours.

That applies to Pakistan as much as to our other neighbours. Our relations have been and are bedevilled by needless tensions. But our lives are intertwined. I believe that a happy and prosperous Pakistan will benefit the entire subcontinent, India in particular. Whenever there is the slightest opportunity to improve our relations with Islamabad, my Government will go the extra mile.

I have deliberately talked to you about these general things and not about specific programmes in particular, because there will be occasions enough for spelling out the programmes. And also because I believe that we are being held back not by one wrong policy, but because of the wrong habits of thought and discourse, which we have slid into. Attend to these and the advances will follow as a matter of course.

Remember the teachings of our sages: One can serve the Motherland wherever one is, one does not require some exalted position to do so. If you are a student, excel in your studies; if you save, save some more; if you run a blood bank, run it as a place of worship. Exert to the utmost, excel: 'Yogah Karmasu Kaushalam'. And every bit of good you do, dedicate it to the Motherland. Be that little squirrel who helped Lord Rama build the *sethubandhan*—the bridge across the Ocean of Challenge—by fetching one particle of sand and then another.

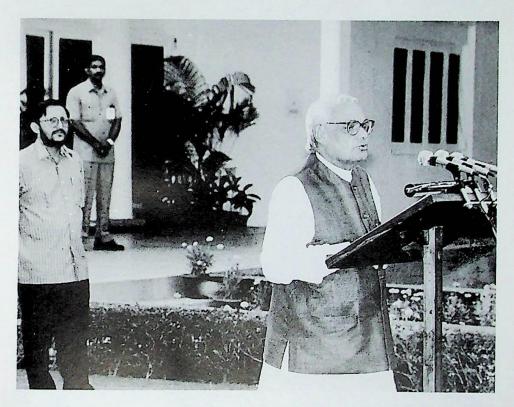
"Serve Bhavantu Sukhinah Sarve Santu Niramayah Sarve Bhadrani Pasyantu Ma Kaschit Dukha Bhag Bhavet!"

(May all dwell in happiness May all enjoy good health May all be blessed by auspiciousness May no one encounter distress).

May this Government be an instrument for realizing this ancient prayer of our sages.

### India Achieves Nuclear Capability

TODAY AT 15.45 hrs. India conducted three underground nuclear tests in the Pokhran range. The tests conducted today were with a fission device, a low yield device, and a thermonuclear device. The measured yields are in line with expected values.



Prime Minister Shri Atal Bihari Vajpayee congratulating the Indian scientists after the successful nuclear tests, New Delhi, 11 May 1998

Statement announcing the nuclear tests at Pokhran, New Delhi, 11 May 1998

Measurements have also confirmed that there was no release of radioactivity into the atmosphere. These were contained explosions like the experiment conducted in May 1974. I warmly congratulate the scientists and engineers who have carried out these successful tests.

# Nuclear Weapons for Self-defence

I RISE TO inform the House of momentous developments that have taken place while we were in recess. On May 11, 1998 India successfully carried out three underground nuclear tests. Two more underground tests on May 13, 1998 completed the planned series of tests. I would like this House to join me in paying fulsome tribute to our scientists, engineers and defence personnel whose singular achievements have given us a renewed sense of national pride and self-confidence. In addition to the statement I now make, I have also taken the opportunity to submit to the House a paper entitled "Evolution of India's Nuclear Policy".

In 1947, when India emerged as a free country to take its rightful place in the comity of nations, the nuclear age had already dawned. Our leaders then took the crucial decision to opt for self-reliance and freedom of thought and action. We rejected the Cold War paradigm and chose the more difficult path of non-alignment. Our leaders also realized that a nuclear-weapon-free-world would enhance not only India's security but also the security of all nations. That is why disarmament was and continues to be a major plank in our foreign policy.

During the 50's, India took the lead in calling for an end

Suo moto statement in Parliament on successful completion of nuclear tests, New Delhi, 27 May 1998



Prime Minister Shri Atal Bihari Vajpayee visiting the nuclear test site at Pokhran, 20 May 1998

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to all nuclear weapon testing. Addressing the Lok Sabha on April 2, 1954, Pt. Jawaharlal Nehru, to whose memory we pay homage today, stated, "Nuclear, chemical and biological energy and power should not be used to forge weapons of mass destruction." He called for negotiations for prohibition and elimination of nuclear weapons and in the interim, a standstill agreement to halt nuclear testing. This call was not heeded.

In 1965, along with a small group of non-aligned countries, India put forward the idea of an international non-proliferation agreement under which the nuclear weapon states would agree to give up their arsenals provided other countries refrained from developing or acquiring such weapons. This balance of rights and obligations was not accepted. In the 60's our security concerns deepened. The country sought security guarantees but the countries we turned to were unable to extend to us the expected assurances. As a result, we made it clear that we would not be able to sign the NPT.

The Lok Sabha debated the issue on April 5, 1968. Prime Minister late Smt. Indira Gandhi assured the House that, "We shall be guided entirely by our self-enlightenment and the considerations of national security". This was a turning point and this House strengthened the decision of the then Government by reflecting a national consensus.

Our decision not to sign the NPT was in keeping with our basic objectives. In 1974, we demonstrated our nuclear capability. Successive Governments thereafter have taken all necessary steps in keeping with that resolve and national will to safeguard India's nuclear option. This was the primary reason behind the 1996 decision for not signing the CTBT, a decision that also enjoyed consensus of this House.

The decades of the 80's and 90's had meanwhile witnessed the gradual deterioration of our security environment as a result of nuclear and missile proliferation. In our neighbourhood, nuclear weapons had increased and more sophisticated delivery systems inducted. In addition, India has also been the victim of externally aided and abetted terrorism, militancy and CC-0. Nanaji Deshmukh Library, BJP, Jammu. Digitized by eGangotri

clandestine war.

At a global level, we see no evidence on the part of the nuclear weapon states to take decisive and irreversible steps in moving towards a nuclear-weapon-free-world. Instead, we have seen that the NPT has been extended indefinitely and unconditionally, perpetuating the existence of nuclear weapons in the hands of the five countries.

Under such circumstances, the Government was faced with a difficult decision. The touchstone that has guided us in making the correct choice clear was national security. These tests are a continuation of the policies set into motion that put this country on the path of self-reliance and independence of thought and action.

India is now a nuclear weapon state. This is a reality that cannot be denied. It is not a conferment that we seek, nor is it a status for others to grant. It is an endowment to the nation by our scientists and engineers. It is India's due, the right of one-sixth of human-kind. Our strengthened capability adds to our sense of responsibility. We do not intend to use these weapons for aggression or for mounting threats against any country; these are weapons of self-defence to ensure that India is not subjected to nuclear threats or coercion. We do not intend to engage in an arms race.

We had taken a number of initiatives in the past. We regret that these proposals did not receive a positive response from other nuclear weapon states. In fact, had their response been positive, we need not have gone in for our current testing programme. We have been and will continue to be in the forefront of the calls for opening negotiations for a Nuclear Weapons Convention (NWC), so that this challenge can be dealt with in the same manner that we have dealt with the scourge of two other weapons of mass destruction through Biological Weapons Convention and Chemical Weapons Convention.

Traditionally, India has been an outward looking country. Our strong commitment to multilateralism is reflected in our active participation in organizations like the United Nations.

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This engagement will continue. The policies of economic liberalization introduced in recent years have increased our regional and global linkages and my Government intends to deepen and strengthen these ties.

Our nuclear policy has been marked by restraint and openness. We have not violated any international agreements either in 1974, or now, in 1998. The restraint exercised for 24 years, after having demonstrated our capability in 1974 is in itself a unique example. Restraint, however, has to arise from strength. It cannot be based upon indecision or doubt. The series of tests recently undertaken by India have led to the removal of doubts. The action involved was balanced in that it was the minimum necessary to maintain what is an irreducible component of our national security calculus.

Subsequently, Government has already announced that India will now observe a voluntary moratorium and refrain from conducting underground nuclear test explosions. We have also indicated our willingness to move towards a de jure formalization of this declaration.

The House is no doubt aware of the different reactions that have emanated from the people of India and from different parts of the world. The overwhelming support of our citizens is our source of strength. It tells us not only that this decision was right but also that our country wants a focussed leadership, which attends to their security needs. This, I pledge to do as a sacred duty. We have also been greatly heartened by the outpouring of support from Indians abroad. They have, with one voice, spoken in favour of our action. To the people of India, and to Indians abroad, I convey my profound gratitude. We look to the people of India and Indians abroad for support in the difficult period ahead.

In this, 50<sup>th</sup> year of our Independence, we stand at a defining moment in our history. The rationale for the Government's decision is based on the same policy tenets that have guided us for five decades. These policies have been sustained successfully because of an underlying national consensus. It is vital to CC-0. Nanaji Deshmukh Library, BJP, Jammu. Digitized by eGangotri

NATIONAL AFFAIRS

maintain the consensus as we approach the next millennium. In my statement today and in the paper placed before the House, I have elaborated on the rationale behind the Government's decision and outlined our approach for the future. The present decision and future actions will continue to reflect a commitment to sensibilities and obligations of an ancient civilization, a sense of responsibility and restraint, but a restraint born of the assurance of action, not of doubts or apprehension. Avoiding triumphalism, let us work together towards our shared objective in ensuring that as we move towards a new millennium, India will take its rightful place in the international community.

### Nuclear Tests for National Security

YOU HAVE COME here from distant places to congratulate me. I am thankful to you. Today, the whole country is complimenting the scientists, engineers and officers and jawans of the army who have carried out successful nuclear tests at Pokhran. Years long efforts have borne fruit. The strength of the nation has manifested itself in the form of successful culmination of these nuclear tests.

It has never been the Indian tradition to be an aggressor or to be unjust or cause atrocities. We have always believed in sacrifice, in dedication and in staking our lives for the sake of our own dignity. We had faced a number of invasions time and again. We have never ventured out to attack any country. But we were divided, we were infinite to our individual circles and we were not concerned about the happenings in other parts of the world. This was the reason why we lost our freedom on a

Speech delivered to a group of people at his official residence, New Delhi, 30 May 1998

number of occasions. But it is also true that our preparedness for fight never ceased. The struggle always continued. We converted our defeat into victory and invaders and tyrants were always given a befitting reply. Whenever we unsheathed our sword for the protection of the dignity of our country or for the protection of our religions, we never let it return to its sheath, until the victory was achieved.

You are aware of the experience which Punjab had during the past 8-10 years. Now there is peace in Punjab. We hope we will be successful in our efforts to maintain peace. Nobody from outside will come here to shatter our peace. It will never happen that we start troubles in other country and vitiate the peace there. We want to live amicably with the neighbour as a good neighbour. But if the neighbour occupies our house, creates disturbances then our safety and security would be of paramount importance to us and that is what we are doing. Nobody should have any doubts about it. This is the objective behind our nuclear tests. Destruction is not the objective, it is self-defence, which we have in our minds. Now the neighbour has also carried out tests and there are number of our friends who have planned for their tests. We asked them to explain, how could they carry out their tests so instantaneously? Can nuclear weapons be developed in just 16 days? Is it possible to launch missiles at such a short notice?

No, it was a result of preparations going on for years. We know this, since we have taken quite a long time in preparations and in reaching this stage. But our scientists wanted to collect complete information and carry out successful tests so that the nation could be assured that they have done whatever the country has expected of them. We gave them a chance. Now, we will intensify our efforts to make the world free of all lethal weapons. There are countries which do not want others to develop weapons, which they possess, but they are not prepared to reduce their own stockpiles. They are not ready to give up their weaponry but are engaged in making these weapons more lethal. We are once bitten twice shy.

Ceru Saly in Shiling biling as said "In meating idea of on one, I also

do not terrify others, but I am fearless (Nirbhaya)." Fearlessness is the power to carry the world with you. The atmosphere of amity in the world is our real capital, it is our genuine strength. Efforts are being made to create rift. Mr. Barnala was talking about atom bomb in the Parliament. He was saying this bomb is being publicised as a Hindu Bomb. It is an effort to create division amongst people. The scientists who experimented included Dr. Abdul Kalam, a Muslim. Also people from different creeds and religions participated in this experiment. This was made for the safety and security of the nation. Nobody should have any misunderstanding or any doubt about it.

In Punjab Hindu-Sikh unity strengthens entire country, which is united in a bond of integrity and protects itself and along with self-protection, India helps in creation of safe and secure environment in the whole of the world and this is the need of the hour. Today the nation has achieved a new awareness and there is new enthusiasm. Let us carry out duties with determination, firmness and honesty. This is what the country needs.

Once again I would like to thank all of you. I am especially thankful to Sardar Amrik Singhji, M.P. who has honoured me. He has handed over a sword to me. I assure you this sword will be raised against injustice. It will always be used for protection of justice. I assure you it will not be used for any wrong object.

# India Stands for Peace and Development

I THOUGHT THAT you have gathered here to compliment me on a fine Budget which we presented yesterday in the Parliament. Some people had apprehensions that the Budget would thrust a lot of burden on people, making their lives miserable, but nothing of that sort happened. We are concerned about how to bring prosperity to the nation, how to better the living conditions of our people and how to raise their standards of living. With this in view we have made more provision for agriculture. A decision to allocate more on education has been taken. A number of other decisions have been taken so that people are not burdened with new taxes and they are given reliefs in present taxes.

Today, the Finance Minister has made it clear that the hike in petrol prices is not of the order of Rs. 4/-, but just Re. 1- per litre has been increased. We have not touched diesel. Prices of cooking gas have also not been raised. The Indian economy is strong enough and is capable of enduring all sorts of pressures.

So far as Pokhran is concerned whatever we have done was guided by the concerns of self-defence, it was not done with the objective of attacking anybody. Twenty-four years ago, in 1974, Mrs. Indira Gandhi did the first nuclear test at Pokhran. We had been waiting for 24 years, perhaps we need another nuclear test. Atomic explosions world over would cease. The stockpiling of nuclear weapons would cease and such weapons would be destroyed. But nothing of this nature happened. I do not want you to count the number of tests, which a number of countries have carried out during these 24 years. But these countries continued preaching us—preaching us about peace;

Speech delivered to a group of people at his official residence, New Delhi, 2 June 1998 2 June 1998 2 June 1998

but on the other hand, they themselves were engaged in preparations; they continued to develop new and sophisticated weapons and they continued to update their old stockpiles that create crisis for whole of the world.

When we noticed that atomic weapons were being developed and stocked around us and when we realized that the peace in the region is endangered, we decided to allow our scientists, our engineers to make the country capable to carry out nuclear tests to the extent necessary for India to safeguard its integrity and to safeguard the peace. The object was accomplished at Pokhran. We have announced that we will not carry out further nuclear tests.

We announced some more measures. We expect that the five big powers, the countries which possess atomic weapons, would check-out programmes to destroy their weapons, which would lead to peace not only in India and neighbourhood, but also the world over. Let us see, if the world pays heed to this safe advice. Meetings are held, speeches are made and conferences are organised, but no decisive and meaningful action towards destruction of nuclear weapons.

Pokhran has shaken the world community and especially the big countries have been made to think. The UN Secretary General also emphasized on the need to have a rethinking on nuclear disarmament. We want to add to it that we need not think, but we need to act. We are in favour of disarmament. We want to build a world, we want to create such an environment in our neighbourhood where people do not have nuclear weapons, but they may try to concentrate on easing day to day problems. Country becomes prosperous when everyone is employed, distinction between rich and poor ceases to exist, everyone gets justice and each one gets adequate protection.

Today, there is peace in India, and there is no tension. No provocative speeches are being made, because we not only want to maintain peace on our borders but within the country also. Each and every citizen must be protected. Irrespective of

religion, language, region and profession, everyone's life must be protected, as everybody's life is valuable. Life should be made beautiful and the thorns which are embedded in the path should be picked up and we must try to make each and every life full of smiles. The task may be difficult, but certainly it is not an impossible one. But we have decided to make difficult tasks easier. We have decided to complete this task.

You have gathered here in such a large number, I would like to express my gratitude once again. It is imperative that we maintain unity in the country. It is necessary that there is peace in the country. The Government is trying to create an atmosphere which may promote harmony and which encourage people to cooperate in solving their problems. Please help us in this endeavour.

#### India's Commitment to Nuclear Disarmament

HON'BLE MEMBERS ARE aware of the resolution adopted on 6th June, 1998, by the United Nations Security Council. I would like to take the House into confidence on our position on this matter.

We regret that the Security Council has acted in a manner in which it has and produced a Resolution that is completely unhelpful in respect of the objectives it seeks to address. The Resolution contains a number of references to nuclear nonproliferation. As I had mentioned in my earlier statement in the House, we are a responsible and committed member of the international community. The Resolution urges us not to carry out any nuclear weapons test explosions. For India, such an urging is redundant because we have already instituted a voluntary moratorium. We have also indicated our willingness to explore ways and means of converting this undertaking into a de jure obligation. Further, we have made clear our readiness to engage in multilateral negotiations on a Fissile Material Cutoff Treaty in the Conference on Disarmament in Geneva. We cannot, however, be expected to commit ourselves in advance of these negotiations, to unilaterally restrain production of fissile materials. In keeping with our commitment to non-proliferation, we maintain the strictest controls over exports of nuclear materials and technologies. Our record in this regard has been impeccable and better than that of some countries who are parties to the NPT or members of the Nuclear Suppliers' Group or even Permanent Members of the UN Security Council.

However, the call made in the Resolution that we should stop our nuclear programmes or missile programmes is unacceptable. Decisions in this regard will be taken by the Government on the basis of our own assessment and national security requirements, in a reasonable and responsible manner. This right, which we claim for ourselves is not something new; it is the right of every sovereign country, and a right that every Government in this country has strongly upheld for the last 50 years.

A glaring lacuna in the Resolution is the total absence of a recognition that the non-proliferation issue is not a regional issue but has to be dealt with in a non-discriminatory global context. We find it unfortunate that the UN Security Council Resolution does not reflect on the judgement of the highest international judicial body—the International Court of Justice, which has questioned the legitimacy of nuclear weapons and called for urgent negotiations for their elimination. In the paper on the Evolution of India's Nuclear Policy laid on the Table of this House, we have reiterated our commitment to nuclear disarmament. Let me categorically state that unlike other nuclear

weapon states who have sought to retain their exclusive hold over their nuclear arsenals, India has no such negotiations for a global convention for the elimination of all nuclear weapons. The attempt to project the recent tests by India as a threat to peace and security is totally misguided and grossly out of focus. Such a portrayal of our policy ignores the positive steps announced by Government to which I have already referred, both in the global disarmament framework and the regional context. Our tests were necessary because of the failure of a flawed non-proliferation regime, and, therefore, we categorically reject the notion that these have adversely affected either regional or global security.

Government have indicated willingness to engage in a meaningful dialogue with key interlocutors on the whole range of nuclear disarmament and non-proliferation issues. Last week, Special Envoy Shri Brajesh Mishra visited Paris and London in this regard. He had meetings at the senior-most levels in the two capitals. Dialogues with other countries are also planned. These dialogues have to be seen as part of a process, a process that will lead to a better understanding of India's position.

Hon'ble Members are aware that India has always desired a peaceful, friendly, and mutually beneficial relationship with Pakistan based on confidence and respect for each other's concerns. I have already said on the floor of both Houses, and I would like to reiterate, that a secure and prosperous Pakistan is in India's interest. Our vision of our bilateral relationship is not confined to a resolution of outstanding issues, but is also directed to the future by seeking to building a stable structure of cooperation, which will benefit the people of both countries. As I wrote recently to Prime Minister Nawaz Sharif, we must not remain mired in the past, prisoners of old contentions. And I say to him today, let us put the past behind us, let us think of the welfare of our children and grandchildren.

We have remained committed to a path of direct bilateral dialogue with Pakistan. This reflects the nations's conviction and confidence that it is only through direct discussions in a sustained and constructive manner that we can encount ahead in

our bilateral relationship. I would again like to reiterate our desire for the earliest resumption of the official talks with Pakistan. The subjects for discussions including peace and security (along with confidence building measures) in Jammu & Kashmir, economic and commercial cooperation and cross-border terrorism have been identified. Our proposals for the modalities of these talks have been with Pakistan since January this year. We await their response. We have also made it clear once again that there is no place for outside involvement of any nature whatsoever in our dialogue process with Pakistan.

Hon'ble Members have expressed strong reservations against attempts to internationalize the Kashmir issue. There is simply no question of India ever agreeing to such internationalism. UN Security Council has chosen to mention Kashmir in its Resolution. This is unacceptable and does not change the reality that the state of Jammu and Kashmir is an integral part of the Indian Union. I would also like to draw the attention of the Hon'ble Members to the terms in which Kashmir finds mention in the Resolution. The UN Security Council has recognised that bilateral dialogue has to be the basis of India-Pakistan relations and mutually acceptable solutions have to be found for outstanding issues including Kashmir. This is in keeping with our position.

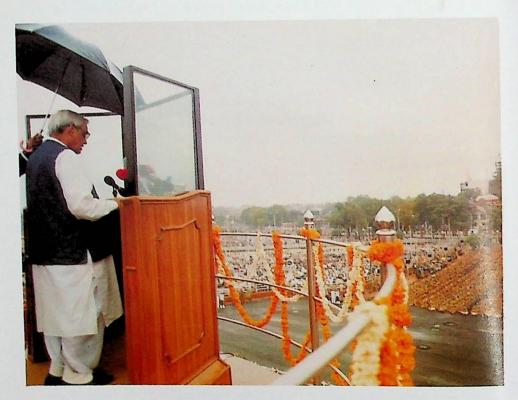
## Harbinger of Progress

I GREET ALL of you on the occasion of the 51st Anniversary of our country's Independence. Half a century has passed still it appears as if it happened yesterday. Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru had unfurled our beloved tricolour in the blue sky from this

Free rendering of the speech in Hindi from the ramparts of the Red Fort on the 52<sup>nd</sup> Independence Day, Delhi, 15 August 1998 CC-0. Nanaji Deshmukh Library, BJP, Jammu. Digitized by eGangotri

very spot for the first time. Since then it has been a tradition to unfurl the National flag from the historic Red Fort. I had never imagined that I shall have this good fortune one day. It is a symbol of strength and potential of the Indian democracy that the son of a school teacher hailing from the dusty and smoky environs of a village has the privilege of unfurling the national tricolour from the ramparts of Red Fort on this auspicious Independence Day.

We all know that independence did not come to us easily. On the one hand, while tens of thousands of our countrymen and women suffered in jails during the non-violent freedom struggle under the leadership of Mahatma Gandhi, on the other hand, thousands of revolutionaries sacrificed their lives on the



Prime Minister Shri Atal Bihari Vajpayee addressing the nation from the ramparts of the Red Fort, Delhi, 15 August 1998 CC-0. Nanaji Deshmukh Library, BJP, Jammu. Digitized by eGangotri

gallows. We owe our independence to these known and unknown martyrs and freedom fighters. Let all of us together pay homage to them and take a pledge that we shall defend our freedom, even if we have to sacrifice everything for this.

Our country has been subjected to foreign aggressions. In this short period of 50 years, we had to face four aggressions. But we have safeguarded our independence and integrity. The highest credit for this undoubtedly goes to our soldiers. Away from their homes and dear ones, braving dangers all the time, they guard our frontiers day and night. This is why we are always reassured about our security. Be it the snowy expanse of Siachen with minus 32 degree Celsius temperature or the thick forests of the North-East, the deserts of Kutch or Jaisalmer or the deep waters of the Indian Ocean—our troops are vigilant everywhere. On our behalf I greet all these troops of the Army, the Air Force and the Navy and other security personnel. While congratulating them we must say—"O! Brave Soldiers, we are proud of you!"

The Forces need our support. Our farmers and labour force have strengthened the second line of defence in the farms, the barns and the factories. We can never forget this. Lal Bahadur Shastri had said: "Jai Jawan, Jai Kisan"—One is incomplete without the other, unfulfilled without the other. I have added a new aspect to this—Jai Vigyan!

We can neither develop nor defend the country in the 21st century with the resources of the past century. We have to modernise our forces to enable them to face any danger and safeguard our independence and integrity. With only this aim, we conducted the nuclear tests on the 11th and 13th of May this year. The tests in Pokhran were not the efforts of just one night. They were the results of years of hard work on the part of our scientists, engineers, technicians and the defence forces. I have only tried to further the work the foundation of which was laid by Smt. Indira Gandhi. I was only a means. The credit for this great achievement goes to our talented scientists and the hard work of our defence forces. I wish to heartily congratulate all of them only this salispicious occasion of this

Independence Day.

I am even grateful to all of you for extending your full support in this trying hour. With a few exceptions every Indian, wherever he may be living, has welcomed this step. Holding our head high that day we proudly proclaimed "we are Indians". For that day in Pokhran, the might of the Nation manifested itself along with nuclear energy.

I wish to make it clear right now that India has always been an ardent advocate of peace and will always remain so. We know and want to use weapons for self defence only. We would never use atomic weapons for attacking anyone. Hence, we have put a self moratorium on any new nuclear tests. We ourselves proclaimed to the world that we shall never be the first user of atomic weapons. We are doing it neither under pressure nor fear of any one. We are doing it voluntarily because of our firm belief in world peace and disarmament. Our dream is to see the world free from nuclear weapons and we want to see this dream come true. Initially, some countries did not appreciate our national security policy needs and doubted our intention. Some of them imposed economic sanctions against us. But now the situation is changing. The world is gradually appreciating the Indian view point. We have been able to make them understand our position. As a result, some of the sanctions have begun to ease. We welcome this changing global attitude.

However, we also want to make one point clear. India is a great country and its people are powerful. The brave people of our country are always ready to face any danger to defend their honour. Our history bears testimony to this. No force on earth can deflect us from our chosen path. I am saying this not out of arrogance but with humility and self-confidence. We are willing to make any sacrifice to uphold the unity, integrity and sovereignty of our country. We wish to improve relations with our neighbours. We know that the easiest way to win a war is not to let it happen. We are ready to hold talks with Pakistan on any subject, at any level and at anytime.

You all know that I have taken the initiative during the CC-0. Nanaji Deshmukh Library, BJP, Jammu. Digitized by eGangotri

SAARC Conference in Colombo. I am somewhat unhappy that we did not get the desired response. Still I have not given up. I will make another effort at reviving the dialogue during the Conference of the Non-Aligned countries in South Africa at the end of this month.

I believe that all problems of the world can be solved through talks. Therefore, whether it is Pakistan or China, we will endeavour to solve our mutual problems through friendly talks. In the last few days, terrorist activities have increased in Jammu and Kashmir. The massacre in Himachal Pradesh appears to be part of a bigger conspiracy. Such terrorist activities every day, from across the border, are like a proxy war. Government has taken these incidents very seriously. We are facing them with all our might and we will not rest content until we have defeated these.

Whether in personal or national life, the 51<sup>st</sup> anniversary is always a golden opportunity to assess the past fifty years. It is also the time for retrospection and preparation for a leap into the 21st century. While making an assessment we most often commit mistakes, tend to underrate our achievements and magnify our shortcomings which results in gloom.

Sometimes, I see a growing tendency of pessimism in the country. There may have been aberrations here and there but things have not gone that bad so as to defy solutions. Our scriptures say that only fools indulge in self-praise. But unnecessary self-condemnation is also like suicide. I want that a realistic assessment of the last fifty years should be undertaken.

When we attained independence, some Western experts had forecast that we were unfit for being a democracy and did not deserve freedom. They said, we would soon disintegrate. But, today, we can say with pride that we have not only safeguarded our integrity and independence but have also shown to the world how the biggest democracy can be governed. Almost all the countries which gained freedom along with us have kept the democratic tradition alive. This is our 12th Lok Sabha and I am the 11th Prime Minister of India. We

have seen over the years transformations taking place from the tiniest Village Panchayat to the Parliament. You all deserve credit for this. Your political maturity in all these elections have baffled political pundits. I congratulate you for this. Our democracy is safe as long as you remain vigilant.

On the occasion of the golden jubilee celebrations of our Independence, the Nation has to address itself to the important fact that independence, national integration, democracy and secularism are complementary to each other.

We have to remain independent under all circumstances. An essential condition for this is national unity. Democracy is necessary for national unity. Secularism and democracy are inseparable parts of national unity. I and my Government are committed to all these four elements.

We oppose communalism in any form. We will ensure full security of the minorities and guarantee their participation in development. We should never forget that we are the citizens of one country. The boundaries of this country extends from Ladakh to Nicobar, from Garo Hills to Gilgit. Ours is a country whose civilization and culture is more than five thousand years old. Such a big country replete with varieties of language, faith, living and food habits has resolved to achieve social and economic justice within the framework of democracy. Simultaneously, we cannot forget that we have to strive to rid this democracy of aberrations. Our legislators behave in such a way in legislatures that even a school teacher would not tolerate such kind of behaviour in his class. Democracy is a system of Governance through free debate. The Opposition has the right to criticize and Government has the right to implement. The Opposition and the Government are complementary to each other and not adversaries

Fearless and impartial voting has to be further strengthened. The electoral system has to be reformed to free it from casteism, violence, money power and other ills so that in the next century our system of governance is further refined.

Once upon a time this country was a land of prosperity. The situation deteriorated and we began to be counted among the poor nations of the world. In the past few years our farmers and agricultural workers have worked very hard to make the country self-sufficient in foodgrain production. An army with an empty stomach cannot fight and a hungry nation cannot have a restful sleep. Our farmers have made the country self-sufficient to justify their being called "Food Providers". I can only pray to God that He showers happiness on the "Food Providers".

There is a shadow of sorrow in this happiness. Today the condition of our "Food Providers" has become difficult. I feel very pained that this year in some states some farmers have had to commit suicide because they could not bear the burden of their debts. I offer my condolences to the bereaved families. As a tribute to these farmers I have taken a decision. The Crop Insurance Scheme will be broadened, new crops will be brought within its purview and its geographical reach will be increased.

A high-powered Commission will be formed to look into the real financial condition of farmers and to improve their economic condition. I want to assure our farmer brothers who are the backbones of the Nation that they will never suffer under this Government.

In Orissa, hunger still stalks the people in places like Bolangir, Kalahandi and Koraput. It is unimaginable that even 50 years after independence some people are still stalked by hunger. I have told the Planning Commission that the outlay on the Employment Assurance Scheme in these areas should be doubled. My efforts will be to ensure that no one dies of hunger. The country has made commendable progress in business, industry and services. Some of our industries are making their mark on the international scene. I congratulate all the workers, employees, managers, industrialists and businessmen for this achievement.

But we know that this achievement is only a stepping stone. It is not the attainment of the final goal which is to see the rise CC-0. Nanaji Deshmukh Library, BJP, Jammu. Digitized by eGangotri

of India as an economic superpower. I know that saying this is much easier than doing it. For this, we will need to follow the path of hard work, establish high standards and depend on self-reliance. We will have to produce goods of international standard which can compete in the global markets. Economic reforms will have to be speeded up. But we will not allow others to take undue advantage of our liberalization. We will implement infrastructure projects with speed.

"Swadeshi" does not mean an inward looking policy. The world has become a global village. Each one is dependent on the other. In this open market system we can use our inner strength to stand up to global competition and I have faith that we will.

This 51st Anniversary of independence is being celebrated not only in India but also round the world. Every person of Indian origin in every country is celebrating this sacred occasion with joy and enthusiasm. I give my good wishes to every person of Indian origin round the globe on this occasion. In some countries our brothers and sisters are watching it live on television.

Non-Resident Indians (NRIs) have brought strength to the economies of the nations where they have settled. Now they have an opportunity to strengthen India's economy. We have floated the Resurgent India Bond (RIB). Non-Resident Indians around the world are taking benefit of this opportunity. So far, the scheme has brought in Rs. 5,000 crore. I am confident that Non-Resident Indians will take further advantage of this scheme.

We will have to solve these problems. I know that all of you, especially our sisters, are feeling the pinch of the rising prices of some commodities. I understand your problem. Nature is to be blamed more for this than the Government. But I know that by saying this your burden will not be lightened. The Finance Ministry and the State Governments will work together to combat the price rise. I also ask for the cooperation of traders. They should not indulge in hoarding or profit-making. We will CC-0. Nanaji Deshmukh Library, BJP, Jammur. Digitized by eGargotri

not hesitate in taking strong measures against such elements. I know that a number of festivals are coming up in the next few days. My effort will be to see that rising prices do not dampen your festive spirit.

The country faces another problem that of corruption which is eating into the vitals of the country like cancer. We have decided to fight it. We have begun the fight from the top. I have not even left out the Prime Minister from the ambit of the Lok Pal Bill which was recently introduced in the Lok Sabha. This has made clear our intentions to fight corruption at the highest level.

Along with this, we wish to fight corruption in the bureaucracy. Very soon, I will initiate action to speed up work in the cell in the Prime Minister's Office (PMO) which is looking into corruption cases against officials. Removal unemployment is an important pledge in our National Agenda. It is affecting the lives of everyone. Employment is the only way of fulfilling the basic needs of the people. Creation of schemes for total employment is difficult, but not impossible. But there will be a need to change the planning process. The basic needs and services will have to be produced by the masses. Science and technology will have to be applied for this.

Government has decided that ten crore people should get employment opportunities over the next ten years. This means that every year one crore people should get employment opportunities. A task force will be set up for this purpose and it will present its report soon.

The status of women is a good indicator to judge the progress of a modern society. We had promised to give women 33 per cent reservation in Parliament and the Assemblies. We are sorry that we have not been able to fulfill this so far. We have already decided to provide free education to girls up to graduation levels. Now we are going to take another major initiative. All girls at the primary level will be provided books in their curriculum free of cost. This will cost Rs. 550 crore to CC-0. Nanaji Deshmukh Library, BJP, Jammu. Digitized by eGangotri

the Government.

A new Insurance Scheme, "Rajrajeshwari" will be started to provide women the economic security. Another insurance scheme, "Bhagyashree" will be started for girls. Both schemes will begin on Diwali Day this year. The premium for the scheme will be Re. one per month, and the policy holder will be able to get Rs. 25,000 in case of emergency. The full details will be announced soon.

Reservation in jobs has already been provided to the Scheduled Castes, Scheduled Tribes and Other Backward Classes. However, implementation of these provisions is very slow. My Government's efforts will be to speed up the implementation process and to fill the reservation quotas as quickly as possible. The administration will be made more sensitive and accountable to these classes.

Youth power is the strength of the nation. It is also the future of the nation. Many years ago I had read the words of Baba Amte "Haath lage nirman mey, nahin mangne, marne." (Use your hands to create, not to ask or hit). This is also our wish. The young girls and boys of India do not have to extend their hands before anyone, nor do they have to use their hands against anyone. They should only dedicate themselves to the task of national reconstruction.

For this purpose, we have decided to form the National Reconstruction Force (Rashtriya Punarnirman Vahini) which will involve youth from 18 to 35 years of age. This force will focus on basic services in the rural and agricultural sectors, protection of environment, mass movement for population control, fight against drugs, spread of education, uplift of dalit and tribal women and in the field of sports, art and culture. These youth will also get honorarium for their work. Initially this scheme will be implemented in some districts and finally will be extended all over the country.

This scheme will be launched on January 12, 1999 which is the Birth Anniversary of Swami Vivekananda and which is celebrated as the South Day, Dr. all hip on the by consumen and women of this country to donate one year of their youth to rejuvenate the nation.

The next millennium is beckoning us. It will be century of Information Technology. The greatest strength of India is its intellect. India has the third largest trained manpower in the field of Science and Technology. We will have to tap this strength. My Government has taken several new initiatives in the field of Information Technology. It is our ambition that the country should become a super power in this field.

Keeping this in view I am announcing a new initiative. Space is a new challenging area which has provided the human race an opportunity to look for innumerable possibilities in the coming century. Space technology has many advantages which India can utilize to meet the aspirations of its younger generation. On the basis of the slogan "Jai Vigyan", my Government wants to fulfil the dreams of our youth. In this direction we will start programmes on a new satellite named Swaran Jayanti Vidya Vikas Antariksh Upagraha Yojana (Golden Jubilee Education Development Space Satellite Scheme).

The first satellite of this programme INSAT 3-B will be assembled and launched before August 15, 1999 by the Indian Space Research Organization (ISRO) within a record time of less than twelve months. Six transponders of this satellite will be available exclusively to execute "Operation Knowledge" which aims to provide computer, internet and computer based education to all the students of the country. All Universities, engineering and medical colleges, research laboratories and other centres of higher learning particularly will be linked to the Information Technology Network before the next Independence Day. This programme will also fulfil the development-related information needs of the states.

Today 125<sup>th</sup> birth anniversary celebrations of Maharishi Aurobindo are coming to a close. He visualized the spiritual, moral and cultural renaissance of the country. Today we should pledge to fulfil his dreams.

Bharat Ratna Baba Saheb Ambedkar once said that political CC-0. Nanaji Deshmukh Library, BJP, Jammu. Digitized by eGangoth

freedom is incomplete without economic and social freedom. Today, on our political Independence Day we cannot forget this moot point. In the half-century gone by, we have been able to keep intact our political independence but could not win the battle of economic and social independence. We have not been able to free the country from the clutches of poverty and unemployment. The stigma of illiteracy could not be erased. The monsters of casteism and communalism still are raising their ugly head. Today on India's 51st independence Anniversary, let us pledge to win economic and social independence.

In the short tenure of my Prime Ministership, I have made an effort to take everybody along and I have practised the politics of consensus. Take the example of Cauvery. There was dispute for years on sharing of Cauvery water among Karnataka, Tamil Nadu, Kerala and Pondicherry. On some occasions, this dispute took a serious turn. Water is used to extinguish fire but if water itself is on fire, what could be done! There is a solution. The solution lies in maturity, harmony, tolerance, patriotism and a willingness to keep others' interest in mind. The recently concluded Cauvery Accord epitomises all this.

Is it not surprising that a large amount of water of our rivers flows away into the ocean, while we fight over our share of water? These disputes have been going on for years. This situation has to be changed. Our rivers which link the states of the country have to link the hearts of the countrymen too. There is a need to formulate a National Water Policy. We have promised to formulate such a policy. However, it is possible only with everybody's cooperation and patience.

My Government has been seriously endeavouring to fulfil the promises made in the National Agenda for Governance. Ours is a coalition and such Governments have their own character which has to be faithfully adhered to. We have prepared a common programme that is the national agenda for our alliance. We have kept all contentious issues out of this arrangementary plantal way. Sheld mation we have be above

the party and personal interests.

The country is passing through a transitional phase today. Our political and administrative system is facing a serious challenge. In such a situation every party and every leader has to conduct himself with a sense of responsibility. History will not forgive us for any action which hurts the nation.

The common man should also ponder over the existing political and administrative set up. We are faced with some basic issues. Are frequent elections in the interest of the country? Is it in the nation's interest to incur heavy expenditures on frequent elections?

I have been Prime Minister only for five months. We have a very thin majority in the Lok Sabha. I am aware of the limitations of the coalition Government. I am also aware that in today's system an innocent sage can be hanged by the power hungry.

I can assure you that I have never compromised on principles in pursuit of power and I will never do it. Being in power or out of power is the same for me. I had been in Opposition for years and faithfully performed my duties. My opponents have also commended it. Today, a poem of Dr. Shiv Mangal Singh Suman comes to mind—

क्या हार में क्या जीत में, क्या हार में क्या जीत में, किंचित नहीं भयभीत मैं। कर्त्तव्य पथ पर जो मिले, यह भी सही, वह भी सही। वरदान मांगूंगा नहीं, वरदान मांगूंगा नहीं।

(I am not afraid of victory or defeat; whatever come my way on the path of duty, I will accept it as it is and would not ask for any favours).

I wish to assure you that till my last breath I will neither ask for favours nor give up the path of struggle. I only need your support. I only need the blessings of one billion of my CC-0. Nanaji Deshmukh Library, BJP, Jammu. Digitized by eGangolion of my

countrymen. There comes a moment in life when one stands at crossroads and ponders over the path to take.

राह कौन सी जाऊं मैं? चौराहे पर लुटता चीर, प्यादे से पिट गया वजीर। चलूं आखिरी चाल कि, बाजी छोड़ विरक्ति रचाऊं मैं, राह कौन सी जाऊं मैं?

(Modesty is being enraged openly and pawn has beaten the queen, should I take one last gambit or leave it all, which path do I take?).

Then I feel that I cannot go into oblivion leaving the challenges behind. I have to struggle. Once again, I reiterate my pledge in your presence from the ramparts of Red Fort.

हार नहीं मानूंगा, रार नहीं ठानूंगा, काल के कपाल पर लिखता-मिटाता हूं। गीत नया गाता हूं॥

(I will not accept defeat and will start the struggle afresh. I will write and unwrite my own destiny and sing a new tune).

Thank you very much. Join me in saying:

Jai Hind

#### Create a New Work Culture

I AM HAPPY to be amongst you at this important function which honours recipients of the Shram Awards for the year 1997. I congratulate you for your excellent contribution to enhancing productivity of your respective organizations and national productivity. I praise your innovativeness and commitment to quality. I command you for your presence of mind, courage and dedication to duty at the work place.

The nation is proud of you. You are the new role models which India needs today. By honouring you with the Shram Awards, the nation is publicizing your shining achievements so that others may emulate you.

Today we are no doubt praising the most outstanding representatives of our working community. But, by felicitating the winners of the Shram Awards, we are also saluting the entire working community of India—that large population of skilled and not-so-skilled workers, of engineers and technicians. of managers and professionals, of those who work in mines and those who work in markets, of those who work with computers and those who work with ploughs. It is you, the working people of India, who keep the wheels of national progress moving. It is your sweat and blood, your knowledge and creativity which helps society to survive and to thrive. Without labour, there is no life. Even the Srishtikarta (Creator) never ceases His work of Srishti (Creation). It is, therefore, right to say that work is both the medium and the opportunity to discover how God Himself operates through human mind and human hands to release divine ends.

For us in India, recognition of the contribution of labour for individual and national growth is not an imported concept. It did not enter Indian consciousness after some thinkers and

Free rendering of the speech in Hindi at the Annual Shram Awards ceremony, New Delhi, 14 October 1998 CC-0. Nanaji Deshmukh Library, BJP, Jammu. Digitized by eGangotri

parties abroad began to talk of the working class and its liberation. Our culture recognises a worker as Vishwakarma— Creator of the universe itself. But what is the condition of the Vishwakarma in today's India? We cannot avoid asking this uncomfortable question. For, as in many other areas of our national life, there is a disturbing dichotomy between our noble cultural and philosophical concepts and the harsh ground reality.

Capital, technology and human labour are the three pillars on which any economic activity rests. Of these three labour which is also rightly called human resources is the most important because even capital and technology are the creation of labour itself. Unfortunately, the two main economic systems of our times namely, capitalism and communism have both failed to accord the right role, recognition and prestige to human resources.

We in India, therefore, have to evolve an alternative that overcomes the shortcomings of capitalism as well as communism. We have to admit that so far we have not succeeded in the effort. As in most other countries, in India too, labour is often treated as a marginal and disposable component. Not only are the material needs of workers insufficiently met, but also their needs at the workplace and their role as creative agents in the organisation are generally ignored. As a result, a worker becomes a cog in the huge economic machine, in the working of which he has little control or say.

ls it not a fact that many of our brilliant workers never get a chance to effectively communicate their ideas to decisionmakers in the organization and participate in the implementation of better work practices? Is it not a fact that most of our organizations are highly hierarchical—displaying a kind of rigid caste structure in factories and offices? Is it not a fact that there are insufficient incentives for good work and also insufficient disincentives for careless work? By incentives, I don't only mean material incentives. Even moral incentives like the Shram Awards go a long way in inspiring and motivating workers. CC-0. Nanaji Deshmukh Library, BJP, Jammu. Digitized by eGangotri

rights. Hence, the *Rigveda* says, "May the members of our society have similar goals. May our hearts be full of love for each other, and may we be united in one thought. May the individual efforts be put together to achieve our common goal." In a sense, this is the core of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights.

And it is also the core of our Constitution that not only seeks to protect the political and civil liberties of every citizen of India, irrespective of her/his caste, creed or faith, but also celebrates the harmonious co-existence of diversity in thought and speech. Those who laid the foundations of our Republic had first-hand experience of oppression, segregation and denial of civil as well as political liberties. That experience could have only further strengthened their resolve to lay an unshakable foundation for a democratic, social and political order. For, they believed, as we believe today, democracy is the best guarantor of human rights.

In recent years, we have taken the constitutional guarantees a step further by establishing the National Human Rights Commission. India is proud to be the only Asian nation with an active, empowered watchdog body to monitor human rights and their violations.

I must, however, add here that rights go hand in hand with duties. It is the state's duty to protect the citizens' human rights. Similarly, it is the duty of the citizens to ensure that these rights are not misused to the detriment of the state. Both the state and the individual have a sacred responsibility, a responsibility whose sanctity cannot be breached.

Nations faced with the spectre of terrorism find themselves in a difficult situation. They are weighed down by their responsibility towards the protection of human rights as well as the violation of human rights by terrorists. India has deported itself well in this tough situation.

But, I would like to tell those who plead for terrorists that terrorism is the ultimate denial of human rights. There is little to distinguish between the blood lust of westerder in the

dictators and today's terrorists. Nations cannot act in isolation against terrorism. They have to evolve an international mechanism. Hence, India's urging for an international conference to work out the modalities of such a mechanism.

In another three weeks we will enter the last year of this millennium. We are about to close the chapter on a momentous century and a tumultuous millennium. Fifty years after the adoption of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, the time has come to take a fresh look at the situation that prevails today. Tyranny of deranged dictators may not be a real threat any more, but there prevails an entirely different threat that could not have been perceived of 50 years ago.

If human rights are supposed to liberate human beings from the fear of subjugation, denial and death, then those rights are gravely imperilled today by the threat of weapons of mass destruction. We have been steadfast in our stand that these arsenals must go; that yesterday's swords should be turned into today's ploughshares.

Our cry, as also that of other nations who stand against weapons of mass destruction, has been lost in the wilderness of competing power blocs. But that has not weakened our resolve. Today, I once again reiterate India's position that weapons of mass destruction should be dismantled. The universal destruction of these lethal arsenals brooks no further delay. Let us adopt a time-frame and let us rid the world of the threat of a nuclear holocaust.

Another point I would like to touch upon is the denial of the very right to be human to millions of people across the world due to unrelenting poverty and non-availability of basic necessities such as food, employment, shelter and education. When an infant dies immediately on birth or before reaching the age of five, the right of that infant to live is denied. When a child grows up in the dark world of illiteracy, the rights of that child are denied. When a person dies due to lack of basic health care, the rights of that person are denied. We have to dedicate ourselves to protecting the infant, the child and the person. My Government has taken some path-breaking steps towards protection of these inalienable rights and empowerment of the unempowered. More needs to be done. It is my firm resolve that it shall be done.

A last point. Fifty years after the adoption of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, the world today is divided in sharp contours between the rich and the poor, the North and the South, between overabundance of wealth and heartwrenching poverty. If the spirit of the Declaration is to be upheld and its noble mission fulfilled, these distinctions have to be minimized. We have to evolve and adopt a new international economic order if the goals, the world set for itself 50 years ago, are to be fulfilled in their totality.

Let us collectively look forward to the next 50 years and work towards avoiding the failures of the last 50 years. Let the "international Magna Carta of all men everywhere" be implemented in letter and spirit.

And, let me conclude with a quotation, over which all of us should ponder, from the Guru Granth Sahib: "In the dwelling of the womb, there is no ancestry or social status. All have originated from the Seed of God."

### Amartya Sen: A Crusader Against Hunger

I AM DELIGHTED to meet and interact with Professor Sen. At one stage it seemed that his visit to Delhi would completely overlap with my tour. Fortunately, this was not to be. I have been following the media coverage of the warm welcome that the people of Bangladesh, West Bengal, and now Delhi have accorded to their most "noble" son. I was particularly pleased to learn that you have set aside your prize money to create a Foundation that will provide primary education to the poorest.

In fact, even before the Nobel Prize Committee of Sweden chose to give you this richly deserved honour, I have been reading about you and what you have written. Your thesis on how economies grow, your focus on primary education, and your long-held views on removing poverty mark you out to be a scholar who cares.

In addition, you are also an outstanding teacher and a patriot. In your illustrious career, spanning different countries and universities, you have never lost your love for Bharat and her children. I was particularly touched to know that you had quoted Gurudev's famous poem. "Where the mind is without fear . . ." At the Nobel Prize dinner in Stockholm. Indeed, it is that "heaven of freedom" that I too want "our country to awake" to.

Professor Sen, you are now being bestowed many awards and honours, including the one that is being given today. However, I suspect that all these have much less meaning to you than seeing that all the children of India and, indeed, South Asia have good schooling and proper healthcare.

(51) missing.

I too would like nothing more than this. For I too believe that nothing is more important than ensuring that every citizen is not just educated, but also has the skills and knowledge to let him or her earn a living.

My Government, too, wants primary education to be the focus of all nation-building. At the speech that I had given at the Conference of Education Ministers in October, I had called for restoring primacy to primary education. I had said that it is the collective task of both the Union and State Governments to remedy the neglect of the social sector.

Tonight you will return to resume your post as head of one of the most prestigious academic institutions in the world, where you will once again, be expanding the mind and the spirit of your students. We wish you the best in your professional and personal life.

Air India has given you this lifetime pass. I hope that you will use it soon, visit us again and again. Now, ladies and gentlemen can we all rise and acknowledge Professor Sen.



Prime Minister Shri Atal Bihari Vajpayee with the Nobel Laureate Economist Dr. Amartya Sen, New Delhi, 5 January 1999 CC-0. Nanaji Deshmukh Library, BJP, Jammu. Digitized by eGangotri

#### Create a New Work Culture

I AM HAPPY to be amongst you at this important function which honours recipients of the Shram Awards for the year 1997. I congratulate you for your excellent contribution to enhancing productivity of your respective organizations and national productivity. I praise your innovativeness and commitment to quality. I command you for your presence of mind, courage and dedication to duty at the work place.

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Today we are no doubt praising the most outstanding representatives of our working community. But, by felicitating the winners of the Shram Awards, we are also saluting the entire working community of India—that large population of skilled and not-so-skilled workers, of engineers and technicians, of managers and professionals, of those who work in mines and those who work in markets, of those who work with computers and those who work with ploughs. It is you, the working people of India, who keep the wheels of national progress moving. It is your sweat and blood, your knowledge and creativity which helps society to survive and to thrive. Without labour, there is no life. Even the Srishtikarta (Creator) never ceases His work of Srishti (Creation). It is, therefore, right to say that work is both the medium and the opportunity to discover how God Himself operates through human mind and human hands to release divine ends

For us in India, recognition of the contribution of labour for individual and national growth is not an imported concept. It did not enter Indian consciousness after some thinkers and is only as good as the efficacy of the enforcement machinery. The existing provisions have failed to deter offenders who keep false accounts and submit bogus returns of expenses. I would urge the Law Commission and other concerned organizations to examine how a rigorous law enforcement mechanism can be put in place to ensure compliance with election laws. In particular, the proposal to strengthen the hands of the Election Commission is a step in the right direction.

I have always maintained that democracy is not a game of 49 versus 51. It is an ethos, a moral order. I had once said in Parliament: ''लोकतंत्र इक्यावन बनाम उनचास का खेल नहीं है। लोकतंत्र मूल रूप से एक नैतिक व्यवस्था है।''

Any number of sound laws would be inadequate if the basic democratic culture in the policy is weakened. Democracy in a multi-party system, and especially in India's unique Centre-State system, cannot be effective without self-restraint, accountability, cooperation, and an attitude of consensus building. Democracy means rule by the majority which values constructive opposition. At the same time, it demands that both the ruling and opposition parties have the will and the capacity to stand as one in times of national crises.

This is especially important in today's era of coalition governments. Coalition governments cannot become—and must not become—synonymous with instability. Frequent elections at the Centre and in the States are good neither for the economy nor for healthy law and order.

We require stable Governments to solve complex problems facing the country. I am not referring to my Government in particular. I am talking on a larger issue. At present there is no year without some election or the other taking place. Efficient Government is the first casualty when winning elections is the first priority of all political parties and understandably so. We, therefore, have to prove to ourselves and to the world that India can have stable and dynamic governments even in a coalition set-up.

Before concluding, I would like to underscore a far-reaching CC-0. Nanaji Deshmukh Library, BJP, Jammu. Digitized by eGangotri

electoral reform which my Government has introduced in the form of a legislation providing for 33 per cent reservation for women in Parliament and State Assemblies. This is an important measure for the political empowerment of women, which will also make our elected bodies more representative. I hope that all the political parties would support the early enactment of this law.

I have made some suggestions here which, I am sure, would be further debated in this seminar. I am also confident that the distinguished participants will present many more useful ideas and suggestions. I assure you that my Government will accord the highest importance to the views expressed and conclusions reached at this seminar.

With these words, I am happy to inaugurate this Seminar.

# Maintain Peace and Harmony

TODAY—THE ANNIVERSARY of Mahatma Gandhi's martyrdom—is a solemn day of remembrance for us. We remember him and other great patriots who gave the best years of their lives, many of them their very lives, for our beloved Motherland.

This year we observe this solemn day against an unhappy backdrop of sectarian violence—terrorism that continues to claim innocent lives, the assault on nuns in Madhya Pradesh,

Free rendering of the message to the nation in Hindi on the occasion of Martyr's Day, 30 January 1999 CC-0. Nanaji Deshmukh Library, BJP, Jammu. Digitized by eGangotri

the attacks on religious places in Gujarat, the ghastly killings of Graham Stein and his two sons in Orissa and the brutal massacre of Dalits in Bihar.

The Nation cannot but be sad; we cannot but grieve. Such violence violates our tradition and culture of tolerance. It goes against everything that Gandhiji and our savants have taught us. Even in the dark days of foreign rule this tradition was an article of faith with us. It goes against the very spirit of Sarva Panth Samabhav, the cornerstone of the Republic of India.

In expressing anguish over these incidents, the President has spoken for the entire nation. I have felt, and, have said publicly that these incidents are an aberration; a blot on our collective conscience.

There can be, and there are, differences of opinion in a rich and diverse democracy such as ours. However, violence is not the instrument to express differences. Dialogue is.

As you all know, Gandhiji was intensely religious. For him questions of faith, of dharma, were matters of life and death. He had delved deeply into the scriptures of all religions. He used to have regular discussions with preachers of different faiths. They often disagreed with each other, without affecting their personal relations. The point of view of the other was heard respectfully, questions were asked and clarifications given.

The point to remember on this sacred day is the Mahatma's message of truth and love, and the method he employed—Not violence on one side and spurning on the other through but debate and public discourse. This is the only civilized way of resolving differences.

Our Constitution guarantees security for all. My Government is committed to this guarantee. We are here to protect all sections of the people, irrespective of their gender, caste or faith.

Let no one be under any illusion the laws of our land are clear, and they will be enforced—without exception, and to the fullest degree—to punish those who violate this sacred CC-0. Nanaji Deshmukh Library, BJP, Jammu. Digitized by eGangotif sacred

guarantee. Suspects have already been rounded up in Madhya Pradesh, and culprits taken into custody in Gujarat. Every agency of the State and the Central Government is pursuing every lead in Orissa. The situation in Bihar will be firmly dealt with. We shall bring the criminals to book.

This is our duty. It is my pledge. My Government will go to any length to keep this pledge. I believe that in such cases, we must ensure trial of the accused on a day-to-day basis. Therefore, there are two immediate tasks—to shun violence and to bring the criminals swiftly to book. Justice cannot and shall not be delayed.

There is a large reservoir of goodwill, understanding and amity among the followers of different religions. We must resolve to enlarge and deepen this precious reservoir. This cannot be done by the Government alone. Maintaining and further strengthening peace and harmony is also the responsibility of citizens. I urge all of you, my dear sisters and brothers, to discharge this responsibility unfailingly—in your own neighbourhood, workplace, village, town and city.

As a mark of my own resolve to carry out my responsibility as a citizen and as the First Servant of the Nation, I have undertaken a day's fast today. I know that I have been joined by millions of my countrymen in this act of atonement and introspection. Gandhiji used to say, "My life is my message." By cleansing our body and soul as a homage to the Mahatma on his *punya tithi*, let us rededicate ourselves to build the India of his dreams.

# II Economic Development

### Global Partnership on Sustainable Development

I AM HAPPY to address you on the occasion of the inauguration of the first-ever Assembly Meeting of the Global Environment Facility. It is indeed fitting that the first Assembly Meeting of this international cooperative venture should be held in the developing world and that too in India.

The twentieth century has witnessed major developments which have momentous impact not only on the lives of human beings but also on planet earth. These include an unprecedented growth in population and in consumption, rapidly increasing urbanization, dramatic changes in the global economic system and the revolution in communication technology. As we are poised on the threshold of the third millennium, we have become increasingly aware that the process of development including industrialization and economic growth have come at a huge cost to society, to the environment and to our very future.

In some ways it is ironical that some of the achievements of the twentieth century themselves pose the challenges for the twenty-first century. With almost six billion people inhabiting this earth, and the global GDP approaching thirty trillion dollars, the pace of human and economic activity is putting pressure on global life-support systems. We witness the depletion of non-renewal natural resources, the continued destruction of life sustaining forests and illegal international trade in protected species of flora and fauna. There is an ongoing depletion of our planet's biological treasures and the threat of an acceleration in global warming and in the greenhouse effect. In short, there is a rapid globalization of

environmental destruction. The environmental impact of human activity is no longer restricted to man made national boundaries.

The problems of environmental degradation call for more than scientific and technological solution. They require the reestablishment of environmental ethics and values practised in traditional societies, with economic development based on these issues. India, as one of the traditional societies, has always believed in the integrality and sacredness of Nature, with allpervading peace as the ultimate purpose of all existence and activity. The age old philosophy of co-existence is not one merely for co-existence of human beings, but it is in fact a basic premise of all living beings and of harmony within the cosmos. The delicate balance of Nature has to be restored, even as we



Prime Minister Shri Atal Bihari Vajpayee lighting the lamp to inaugurate the First Assembly Meeting of Global Environment Facility, CC-0. Nanaji Deshmukh Library, B.p. Jampil Digitized by eGangotri

have to ensure complementarity and co-existence of different life forms, between plants and animals and between Nature and man. The balance of five basic elements—the *panchtatva*—air, water, fire, the earth and the sky has to be restored.

Based on our experience and understanding of global environment we realize today that sustainable development at the national level cannot be pursued in isolation. Quality of life of the nations today as also in the future, depends to a very large extent on the policies and actions that the fellow nations of the world pursue. Against this background, new partnerships have to be established for conservation and sustainable development while ensuring equitable distribution of technology and social advancement. Promoting these partnerships require making the most of the diverse repertoire of knowledge, skills, perceptions and of assets belonging to a wide cross-section of nations and societies.

When we analyse the nature of pollutants, we find that both affluence and poverty contribute to their high levels. The problems of the industrialized and the developed world stem from their high levels of economic activity and consumption. The degeneration of forests and natural resources in the developing countries, on the other hand, can be attributed largely to the lack of resources and alternative source of energy and income generation. The strategies to tackle these two distinct causes therefore, need to be significantly different. In the case of the rich and developed world, the issues can be best handled by laying stringent emission norms, limits on pollutants and by enforcing these stringent norms and limiations. However, for the developing and the underdeveloped world, the best approach would be to put into place an incentive structure that would encourage conservation and discourage the scavenging of nature, without compromising economic development, and rapid alleviation of poverty. For the developing countries, we should make concerted efforts to facilitate and promote adoption of environment friendly techniques of production and also undertake far greater measures to disseminate information about the ill-effects of polluting forces.

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As part of international efforts to contain the ill effects of environmental degradation and to encourage sustainable development, nations have put in place several ecological treaties like the Montreal Protocol, the Framework Convention on Climate Change, the Convention on Bio-diversity, the Convention to Combat Desertification, etc. Although much attention seems to be focussed on climate change, on global warming and Ozone layer, very little is being done to address the environmental problems facing poor societies, whether it be paucity of clean drinking water or poor sanitary conditions.

Let me reiterate that if we are committed to successfully address the challenges of sustainable development, and hence of environmental conservation, then it will require an international movement, the like of which has never been seen before. It will require effective integration of the sporadic efforts being made by the different players whether it be international organizations, national Governments, or non-Governmental organizations; whether it is business and the forces of development, or environmentalists and the forces of conservation.

Most important, however, will be the need to make environment protection a people's movement—with the close, participative involvement of the local communities, governmental bodies, NGOs, international bodies like the GEF, industry and various economic service providers. History has shown that all good ideas begin to make the desired impacts only when they become mass movements. It is high time we made environment protection a national and international people's movement. It is in the self-interest of the nation states and in the larger interests of the world we live in, that we leave behind a better world for our children.

Since the 1992 Rio Earth Summit, many international business leaders have taken the lead in urging the business community to be environmentally more sensitive and responsive. The presence of all of you, ladies and gentlemen, at this first-ever Assembly Meeting of the Global Environment Facility is very heartening and speaks of your commitment to CC-0. Nanaji Deshmukh Library, BJP, Jammu. Digitized by eGangotri

the cause that we address together. During the post-Rio phase, GEF is one of the instruments that has emerged to give effect to various Rio agreements. The restructuring of the GEF in 1994 has given confidence in the vitality and responsiveness of this institution. As the GEF is a unique expression of the partnership forged at Rio between the North and the South, between the UN system and the Bretton-Woods system, it would be our collective endeavour to sustain and strengthen it as an effective instrument of cooperation for promoting sustainable development.

The imperative of sustainable development places a common responsibility on rich as well as developing nations to concentrate their R and D efforts on three immediate projects: One, all-out effort to harness renewable sources of energy on a large-scale and at a lower or comparable costs; two, development and commercialization of new materials; and, three, across-the-board introduction of energy-saving techniques and management practices. After all, energy saved is energy produced.

Government of India is committed to rapid and sustainable development, which we believe is, the surest way of improving the living standards of our people and eradicating the curse of poverty from our nation. We see strong complementarity between the goals of economic development and improvement in the environment. We must never forget that abject poverty, and all that goes with it, is the worst blight on our planet's environment.

I would like to mention here that India has been in the forefront of voicing the developing nations' concerns over environment protection and sustainable development on various international platforms. For example, it was an Indian Prime Minister who put forward this new agenda in the first global environmental summit in Stockholm in 1972. Since then, my country has been consistently championing this cause.

Naturally, the imperative of sustainable development has found a strong resonance within the country, too. As we have indicated in our National Agenda for Governance, we will

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continue with economic reforms, strengthen macro-economic stability, and devote special attention to the development of infrastructure, agriculture and education. We firmly believe that more and better education, especially at primary and secondary levels, is a crucial pre-requisite for both rapid economic development and a more informed and effective social and legal framework for preserving and improving our environment.

We are convinced that in areas such as education, rural infrastructure, water resources management and land use, Government can and must articulate effective combination of social expenditures, appropriate incentives and realistic regulatory systems to jointly serve the goals of rapid, broadbased development and environmental improvements. We propose to establish effective legal frameworks for the protection of the environment, and to unveil a comprehensive National Environment Policy to harmonise the demands of development and environment and to balance the needs of the present and the future.

The principle that poverty alleviation and economic development are the first priorities of developing countries must continue to be the guiding factor for all international cooperation. The GEF has built on this principle to begin implementation of sustainable development goals, within its area of concern. It deserves our full and unanimous support—through adequate and timely contribution from all those that provide such contributions, and through efficient and meaningful use of the GEF resources by those who receive them.

We are proud to be the partners in the establishment, evolution and growth of GEF. Amongst the recipient countries, India is one of the largest contributors to the GEF replenishment, and we have contributed more than any of the other recipient donors.

I declare the Assembly open and wish you success in your deliberations towards refining GEF as an effective collaborative instrument for achieving our mutually cherishes goals.

## Harmonizing Economic Liberalization and Social Liberation

I AM HAPPY to be with you this morning to inaugurate your Annual Session and to attend your National Conference.

Speaking at such important business conferences is a matter of pleasure for me. But before accepting the invitation from the organisers this time, I wondered whether the pleasure of inaugurating your Annual Session comes with a price tag because for the third consecutive year the CII's Annual Session has been inaugurated by a different Prime Minister. Your president has said some good words about me in his welcome remarks. They are, no doubt, pleasing to my ears.

But they also remind me of the enormous expectations people have from me and from my Government. In the recently concluded general elections, the people have given a mandate to the BJP and its allies to govern. At the same time, it is a fractured mandate. The challenge before us is to do full justice to our job even though we have a fractured mandate.

I assure you, that in spite of some teething problems, the people's desire to see a stable, strong and action-oriented Government in New Delhi will be fulfilled. We have accepted the challenge.

The theme for this conference, "Bringing Growth Back: Economy, Education and Employment", captures in a nutshell, the main thrust of our National Agenda for Governance, which is the blueprint for our policies.

And as such there is a happy convergence of the concerns

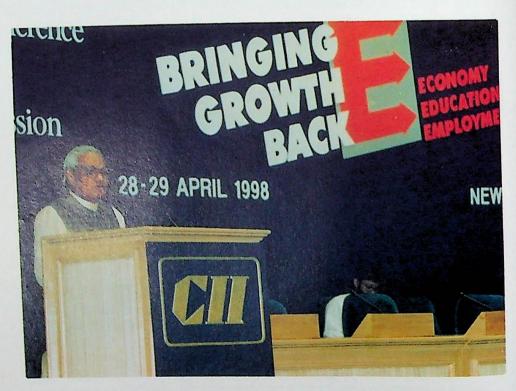
Inaugural address at the Annual Session and National Conference of the Confederation of Indian Industries (CII), New Delhi, 28 April 1998

of the Government and the Indian Industry. Such a participative relationship will enable India to realize her full potential of economic growth and the well-being of our people.

I have good reason to be emphatic on this point. Today, not only the global standing of a nation, but also its security, integrity and stability, indeed its very existence as a nation, is dependent on its economic strength.

I, therefore, firmly believe that the time has come to insulate the nation's economy as much as possible from the turmoil in its democratic polity.

It is high time all sections of our society, including those



Prime Minister Shri Atal Bihari Vajpayee addressing the Annual General Meeting of the CII, New Delhi, 28 April 1998 CC-0. Nanaji Deshmukh Library, BJP, Jammu. Digitized by eGangotri

in business, industry and politics, sank their partisan obsessions and focused their attention on the all-important national imperative: Growth. Let the common partriotic mantra for one and all be: Growth, More Growth and Still More Growth. With the Union Budget due for presentation in early June, this is an opportune time to spell out our philosophy of growth.

The National Agenda has stated in clear and unambiguous terms that my Government shall strive to develop a national consensus on all major issues confronting the nation.

The problems facing the Indian economy are too many, too complex and far too important to be subjected to a partisan approach. We simply cannot afford to play politics with the nation's economy any more. This, indeed, will be the real test of patriotism on the economic front.

This point demands candid and even self-critical elaboration. The first phase of economic liberalization was launched in 1991. Some of the reforms brought about positive changes.

Unfortunately, the measures taken to free the economy were not matched by checks and balances. And we have paid a price for those lapses.

Also, the liberalization process suffered from inadequate attention to the eradication of unemployment and to many critical issues in the social sector such as healthcare, education and housing. Importantly, it failed to give a momentum to infrastructure development, which is now choking growth.

In our view, the reasons lie in the failure of the Government to effectively address the core concerns of the Indian Industry. They lie in the failure of the Indian Industry to appreciate the core concerns of the Government. They also lie in the failure of both the Government and the industry to convince the common man that he too has a stake, a vital stake, in the reforms process.

That is why, during the election campaign, I repeatedly stressed that India urgently needs to reform the reforms process.

To explain what we mean by this, let me first enumerate what I think are the three main complaints of the industry against the Government, the three main complaints of the Government against the Industry, and also the three main complaints of the common man against both the Government and the Industry.

The three chief complaints of the Industry against the Government are:

One: Industry thinks the Government is the root cause of avoidable delays owing to excessive controls. Even after seven years of reforms, a typical industrialist is forced to spend considerable time in management of the Government than in management of his own business.

Two: Industry complains that the Government takes too much, but provides too little and that too haphazardly.

Three: The Government is in all those areas of business in which it had no business to be there in the first place.

Now let us look at the three chief complaints of the Government against the Industry.

One: Government feels that the Industry does not share its social objectives.

Two: Government thinks the Industry wants the Government to abide by the canons of good governance such as transparency, accountability and fiscal prudence. Fair enough.

But does the Industry itself follow transparent accounting and strict norms of disclosure? Does it meet its obligations towards consumers, workers, shareholders, bankers, the environment and the society in general?

Three: Many industrialists want competition, but in other industries. In their own industry, they want protection.

Now, what are the common man's perceptions of both the Government and the Industry? Hearthing that cangotri

One: The top people in both the Government and the Industry are hand-in-glove to make the system work for their own self-enrichment.

Two: Neither the Government nor the Industry cares for the real needs of the people.

Three: There are two separate sets of laws in this country: one for the ordinary people and the other for the "big people" in the Government and the Industry.

Now, let us ask ourselves:

- Are any of the above perceptions wrong? No.
- Isn't it a fact that no genuine reforms process is possible without squarely addressing these valid perceptions? Yes.

That is why I say that India urgently needs to reform the reforms process. We need to reform the Government, which is the engine in any nation's development strategy. The Government must become a helper and not a hurdle. Therefore, I urge each and everyone in the Government, from the minister to the lowest clerk, to recognize their duty and responsibility flowing from this commitment.

We need to reform the Industry. Broadly speaking, every industry and industrialist is entitled to grow to their fullest potential. But without recourse to unethical practices or evasions of dues to the states. We need to also reform the mentality of the common citizen. He must realize the imperatives of hard work, quality work and discipline. Responsible citizenry demands no less. And barring those who belong to the weaker sections of the society and hence deserve all the support of affirmative action that we can render unto them, the others should begin to respect the laws, which fashion and govern a sound economy. Which means, they must pay for what they use. And, yes, they must also get what they pay for. In short, the nation as a whole needs to reform itself in order to be able to effectively face the new challenges and seize the new opportunities of the 21st century.

Let us together create a mindset revolution to harmonize the objectives of economic liberalization and social liberation. Let us together build a strong, prosperous and self-confident India, freed from the curses of mass unemployment, illiteracy and other manifestations of underdevelopment. And let us make India a global economic power in the 21st century. The key to translating this vision into reality is growth, growth with employment and equity.

In our National Agenda, we have pledged to bring sustainable GDP growth into 7 to 8 per cent bracket from the present level of 5 per cent. Many people doubt if it is an achievable target.

I would say that this is a moderate target, given both India's capacity and necessity. Even at this rate of 7 to 8 per cent, India has to wait for well over half a century to catch up with the developed world. Can we afford to be slower than this?

We must grow faster. We can grow faster. We simply have no other alternative. In the sphere of the economy, I should tell you plainly that I have inherited a weak and deficit ridden economy. But I am not complaining. My job is not to harp on the past but to look to the future, not to complain but to lead. Shri Kumar has rightly talked about the need to rebuild confidence and morale of industry. He has especially highlighted the issue of bringing back decision-making to the fore.

I would like to utilize this occasion to tell you and the nation what my Government will do in the next three months.

All of us are legitimately concerned about the prolonged downturn in the economy. Industry, especially, is looking to the Government to take necessary steps to kick-start the economy.

This is no doubt dictated by the objective of faster economic growth. But it is also necessitated by my own Government's stated goal of creating at least ten million new

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jobs each year in the economy. We shall soon announce a series of schemes to mobilize investible funds from idle resources existing in the country but unavailable to the exchequer.

In consultation with trade and industry we will take all necessary steps to reduce the currently untenable level of NPAs of banks and financial institutions. We will also devise machinery for resolving disputes between the revenue departments and trade and industry to speedily obtain for the Government what is legitimately the State's. Also suitable policy measures will be taken to tap new and unconventional sources of funding, such as debt market instruments, pension and insurance funds for infrastructure projects.

The Government is committed to broaden, deepen and speed up the process of internal liberalization. In the case of globalization, we will adopt a carefully calibrated approach, for reasons most of you appreciate.

The Government will play the role less and less of an active player in the economy and more and more of a legislator, facilitator and regulator. Where necessary, it will be the protector of India's commerce and industry.

My Government's relationship with industry will be based on trust, not marred by mistrust. I come from a political tradition that does not look upon commerce and industry with suspicion. When it was conventional political expediency to decry entrepreneurship, we championed their cause. As a government, we will do more.

As a concrete proof of this approach, we will soon appoint a commission to comprehensively review in a short time-frame all the the administrative laws, rules and regulations governing industry and trade. Such of them which have outlived their utility will be either totally scrapped or radically simplified. With this move, we aim to enable Indian entrepreneurs, small, medium or big to create more wealth for themselves and for the nation.

The Companies Act will be drastically overhauled. The CC-0. Nanaji Deshmukh Library, BJP, Jammu. Digitized by eGangotri

Foreign Exchange Regulation Act (FERA) will be replaced with a legislation consistent with the current needs.

We will ensure that crucial Government orders are not passed without first ascertaining their consequences on domestic industry. Many of the problems faced by industry are at the state and local levels. The process of internal liberalization will be widened to reach those operational levels.

With this in view, we have recently appointed a special Task Force, headed by Shri Bhairon Singh Shekhawat, to advise the Government on devolution of financial and administrative powers to the states.

Infrastructure development is the very backbone of any strategy aimed at achieving higher growth and large-scale employment generation. However, an unfortunate impression gained ground after the first phase of liberalization that the Government will have less and less to do with infrastructure development.

As a result, a slowdown has taken place in investments in this vital area of the economy. My Government will substantially increase investments in infrastructure development. Simultaneously, private sector investments will receive far greater policy and implementation support.

The Minister for Power has just recently announced wideranging initiatives on the power front. My Government will take firm decisions and also support firm decisions of State Governments to bring financial viability to the power sector. The State Electricity Boards are bankrupt and need restructuring. The drain on internally raised resources has to stop.

In this regard, the country should take note of the bold but painful steps the Andhra Pradesh Chief Minister, Shri Chandrababu Naidu has taken to guard and raise the viability of power generation and distribution in his state. We also support, in this regard, the initiatives of the Orissa Government.

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If we analyze the causes for many of India's economic problems, we find that the chief one has been our inability to harness the full creative potential of our working people. This is true of both the public sector and the private sector. Both have their own pluses and minuses, although it is the minuses of the public sector which often get highlighted more. The challenge before both the public sector and the private sector in India is how to vastly and quickly increase productivity through better utilization of our human potential. In the highly inter-linked global economy that has today come into being, the only guarantor for survival and success is productivity. The message of globalization for each and every economic activity in India is stark "Become more productive or perish".

This warning is valid for many of our Public Sector Undertakings, too. India has committed vast amount of national resources in running the PSUs. However, the expectations and promises with which they were set up have been largely belied. The productivity, competitiveness and return on investment of many PSUs give us no cause for satisfaction. Restructuring of PSUs has, therefore, become a national imperative. We just cannot afford to have national assets to underperform or, worse still, become a drain on scarce budgetary resources. My Government is committed to PSU reforms that will safeguard both national and workers' interests.

Making Indian companies and India's national economy more productive is not going to be an easy or painless task. We must recognize here that capital is scarce and costly and this is especially so in view of the current downturn in the national and global economy. Market conditions have become highly volatile, although we in India can say with some satisfaction that our economy has remained relatively immune to the crisis that has engulfed several countries in South-East Asia and elsewhere.

In this rapidly changing global scenario, better utilization of human resources and adoption of more efficient technologies and work practices become all the more important. This places major responsibilities on all of us on policy makers in the

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Government, management, trade unions, R&D institutions, media and, of course, each and every worker. In this context, the first thought I would like to put before my countrymen is that productivity enhancement must be given the priority in all sectors of the economy. The appeal I would like to make to every worker and every organisation is: "Work faster, work better, work for the nation".

Concretely, this would mean that individuals as well as organizations must pay greater attention to cutting costs and boosting the quality of their products and services. Both individuals and organizations must give priority to better management of available assets, before drawing up plans for new investment. They must think of ways to save energy and materials in every economic activity.

Studies have shown that with technologies and work practices, Indian industry can save up to 30 per cent of the energy which it not consumes and 15-20 per cent of the materials which it now uses. The greatest scope for saving, however, is in time, which is also the most precious of all the economic resources. If a certain work can be completed in half the time that it otherwise takes, it not only satisfies the consumer, but, to that extent, also doubles the rate of growth of the organization.

I believe that there is a vast scope for both speeding up and improving the work in every office or productive establishment in the country, especially in the Government. I have a specific proposal to translate this potential into reality, which I would like to place before the nation.

Let every organization in the country invite ideas and suggestions from its employees at all levels on how it can work faster and better. After selecting the most suitable ideas and suggestions, organizations should draw up concrete, time-bound plans to implement them with the active participation of all their employees. Let us call this the "National Work Improvement Campaign", whose aim is to create a new work culture in India.

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I call upon policy makers in the Government, captains of industry and trade unions and leaders of other concerned organizations to develop this concept further so that we can launch the "National Work Improvement Campaign" in an expeditious and effective manner. The cornerstone of the "National Work Improvement Campaign" will have to be an emphasis on teamwork. Excellence in work is rarely the result of individual excellence. Rather, it is the cumulative outcome of the proper management of team talent. In order to enrich and activate team talent, we must create organizations that are less hierarchical and more democratic. We must create an environment which accepts creative ideas and initiatives from whichever direction they may come. The "National Work Improvement Campaign" must also place high emphasis on continuous learning at the work place. Training, re-training and acquisition of new knowledge should become an integral part of our work culture.

Let each and every economic organization in the country become a Learning Organization and let India itself become a Learning Nation. Our efforts to create a new national work culture will bear the desired fruit only if it is rooted in the ageold concept of Seva. Work becomes more than a job—indeed, work becomes workshop—only when it is done with the attitude of Samaj Seva and Rashtra Seva.

Once again I congratulate the Shram Award winners and their managements and express the hope that they will continue to display the qualities that have won them this prestigious national honour. Before concluding, let me reiterate my appeal to all my countrymen: Let us together honour Bharat Mata by launching, sincerely and earnestly, the National Work Improvement Campaign with the central appeal: "Work Faster. Work Better. Work for the Nation".

## India's Commitment to Universal Declaration of Human Rights

I GREET YOU all, and every brother and sister around the world, on the 50th anniversary of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights. This day, 50 years ago, the member states of the United Nations adopted what President Roosevelt so movingly described as "the international Magna Carta of all men everywhere".

The immediate backdrop of the Declaration was the horrifying spectacle of man's brutality against man as witnessed during the Second World War. During those bleak years of this century, an individual's inalienable right to dignity and liberty were brutally trampled upon.

The Universal Declaration of Human Rights was supposed to be a safeguard against the repetition of the brutalities of World War II and to establish the over-riding supremacy of human rights. This noble purpose was underscored by the Vienna Declaration that asserted: "All human rights are universal, indivisible, inter-related and inter-dependent."

However, the existence of human rights, the very characteristic of these rights—of being inalienable and indivisible—was not discovered or forged in 1948. These rights have existed ever since the advent of man and woman. They have been in evidence ever since the quest for equality began, a quest that transcended race and religion. Indeed, human rights are intricately linked to the evolution of human society.

The sages of ancient India realized the importance of human

election to the State Assemblies and every election even to the local self-governing bodies, brings us face to face with the serious shortcomings in our electoral system.

These shortcomings are not confined to the time and process of elections. They have a direct bearing on governance and on the functioning of the elected bodies. If we take the accumulated experience of governance at various levels and of the functioning of our elected bodies in the past few decades, we see how the infirmities in our electoral system have greatly weakened Indian democracy.

The common people are the ultimate sufferers of flawed elections and the bad governance that results from them. Such governments lack the capacity to deliver on their promises to the electorate. This is the main reason why the political parties and the entire electoral exercise have less credibility today than before in the eyes of the voters. The resultant apathy and cynicism are not good for our democracy.

Indian democracy thus exhibits a worrying paradox. On the one hand, we take legitimate pride in the fact that India is the world's largest democracy and that its preservation is our greatest achievement since Independence. It is also true that at no time does the vibrancy of Indian democracy become more manifest than during elections. Yet, on the other hand, it is the manifest weaknesses in our electoral system that have impaired our democracy the most.

Removal of this paradox is the greatest task before us as we get ready to face the challenges and opportunities of the 21st century. Electoral reforms, therefore, must become a matter of high priority for the entire country and, especially, the political class. The National Agenda for Governance, which my party and our alliance partners have jointly adopted as the basis for our Government, has clearly stated our commitment to implement electoral reforms.

Personally speaking, this has been my area of concern for a long time. I am particularly concerned about the mounting

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cost of fighting elections, which is at the very root of political corruption. It is also related to the other dangerous trend: increasing entry of criminal elements into politics. Dr. Ghatate in his welcome address mentioned that as early as in March 1974, I had moved a resolution in the Lok Sabha on free and fair elections to the following effect:

"This House expresses concern over the growing influence of money-power and abuse of official machinery in elections and in order to ensure free and fair elections directs the Government that recognized political parties be given election grants as recommended by the Wanchoo Committee."

On that occasion, I had said: "Free and fair elections are the basis of democracy; it is a matter of regret that elections in India are getting more and more corrupt. The influence of money in elections is increasing. The law has put a ceiling on a candidate's election expense . . . But everyone knows this limit is observed more in the breach.

Political parties can approach the people at large for fund collection. But, elections cannot be fought on that alone. Now moneybags have to be tapped for the election of most candidates of all parties. By law, companies cannot donate to political parties, but political parties can collect funds. Obviously, this is number two money. There is no accounting of this money."

The Joint select Committee of Parliament had accepted the recommendations of the Wanchoo Committee and had recommended that an expert committee be set up for this. This was, however, not done.

In 1990, the then Law Minister Shri Dinesh Goswami had prepared an Amendment Bill proposing extensive amendments to the Representation of the People's Act. Those proposals represented a consensus between all the political parties. It is true that some of those proposals have been given effect to in 1996, but many remain unimplemented including the proposals relating to election expenditure and State funding of candidates.

My Covernment has taken the exercise of electoral reforms

seriously. We appointed a Committee on "State Funding of Elections" under the chairmanship of Shri Indrajit Gupta. This Committee has recently submitted its report. The Law Minister made a reference to that report in his speech. I am happy that Shri Indrajit Gupta is invited to the Seminar to preside over the session on "Election Expenses and State Funding of Elections" to be held tomorrow.

To facilitate free and fair election, the Election Commission has published certain guidelines. There is a demand that the Government give statutory status to some of them. Effective implementation of these rules of conduct depends upon the good sense of the political parties, sense of discipline on the part of the administrative apparatus, and the willing cooperation of the public at large.

The proposal of the Law Commission to introduce a "List System" of election which is also known as proportionate representation, for an additional 138 seats of the Lok Sabha is a welcome step. I say so because the system of "First-Past-the-Post" is mostly a gamble. It does not always represent the people's will, especially in a multiparty system like ours. Facts prove that in most constituencies, the winning candidates get elected on the basis of a minority of the votes cast, resulting in general nationwide misrepresentation.

Many of our parties represent democratic opinion of specific sections of our society. However, their share in the election bodies does not always correspond to their vote share. This creates a sense of non-involvement, among other anomalies.

The "List System" of election, widely prevalent in some European countries, has several advantages. The fact that the Indian political scene is marked by predominance of "national leaders" makes the "List System" of conducting elections even more relevant in the Indian context.

However, the "List System" also has some obvious shortcomings. One of them is that it makes the election of a candidate depend solely upon the patronage of a political party. This could lead to centralization of control within the political parties. The candidates in the control within the political parties.

populace, and his track record in public life becomes unimportant in this system. Excessive reliance on it could even widen the gap between the Government and the electorate.

Another disadvantage is that, in a country of India's diversities, the "List System" by itself, would yield a fractured mandate, with the legislature divided into many blocks which may or may not show the requisite sense of cooperation in forming a stable government.

I would urge the participants in this seminar to consider the pros and cons of both the "List System" and the "First-Pastthe-Post" systems and propose a suitable combination of the two which conforms to Indian needs and realities. In this context, the related idea of introducing a "run off" election in constituencies where the top candidate fails to poll fifty per cent of the votes also deserves consideration.

Another important proposal of the Law Commission, which deserves our serious attention is the summary disqualification of members in the event of defections. I am in favour of it, especially in the light of the evident failure of the existing Anti-Defection Act to check this malaise.

I must, however, state my reservations about the suggestion that, mere filing of charges against an elected member would be sufficient to attract disqualification provisions. Experience shows that motivated criminal charges against political rivals to gain an unfair advantage have become quite frequent. In my view, the member should be disqualified only if a court of law frames the charges.

As regards the proposal to minimize the influence of money power, all of us must pay heed to the cautionary observation of the Supreme Court: "Money power casts a sinister shadow on our elections and the political pay off of undue expenditure in the various constituencies is too alluring for parties to resist temptation . . ." In this context, I think that the expenditure incurred by the Party must be added to that incurred by the candidate in filing the returns to the election commission.

In the ultimate analysis, even a reformed by lectoral system

infrastructure projects in India. They have led to not only cost and time overruns, but also loss of opportunities in downstream income and employment generation. This neglect and waste will be positively addressed.

Towards this end, the Prime Minister's Office will directly monitor all projects capitalized at more than Rupees one hundred crore each in the areas of power, roads, bridges, and dams, irrigation, telecommunication, oil and energy, railways, ports and airports.

My office will seek a monthly progress report on all such projects and ensure that they are completed and commissioned on due dates.

Agriculture is the very heart of our economy and culture. Farm production has to reach a growth rate of at least 5 per cent Otherwise our goals of overall economic growth and employment generation, as also our promise to build a hunger-free India by the year 2010 will remain unfulfilled. Food security on a long term basis is our urgent and immediate concern.

Government plans to earmark substantial Plan funds for public investment in agriculture, rural development, irrigation, horticulture, afforestation, wasteland development and related rural infrastructure.

We will also pay special attention to the modernization of the agro-processing industry. It has immense potential for employment generation.

Agro-processing industry provides a critical link between the agriculturist and the urban consumer. We will strengthen this link, among other things, by encouraging collaboration between the cooperative agriculture sector and the corporate sector. Opportunities in exports of food products will be vigorously pursued.

We intend to give vastly higher policy attention to the small-scale industry and *Bhagidari* sector, as these are important

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sources of self-employment. This sector makes the highest contribution to the country's GDP. My Government will welcome suggestions from the CII and other Industry organizations as how to provide to this sector critical developmental inputs such as easy, adequate and timely credit marketing infrastructure and appropriate technology.

Housing and construction are the greater generators of productive employment, next only to agriculture and services. The National Agenda for Governance has pledged to facilitate construction of two million new housing units each year, with priority for low and middle-income family needs.

Within the next 60 days, my Government will unveil a National Housing Policy. All impediments in the realization of our stated goals in the policy will be removed forthwith. The Urban Land Ceiling Act will be suitably amended to facilitate realization of housing goals and to boost construction.

Information technology is an area of special importance. It has already revolutionised the world. No country can hope to develop global competitiveness if it ignores information technology.

This is one area where India can quickly establish global dominance. India can be fully competitive in this area with tremendous pay-offs in terms of income generation and creation of high quality jobs.

This area also provides an alternative and attainable opportunity to Indian business and industry to become software czars. Just three Indian companies, not exactly household names, have today a market capitalization of Rupees thirteen thousand crore. And all are also aggressively exporting.

In this connection, I invite specific suggestions from trade and industry for removing any bottlenecks in the way of faster growth of the Infotech industry.

In the National Agenda, we have pledged to make India a software superpower. Within the next 30 days, we will set up CC-0. Nanaji Deshmukh Library, BJP, Jammu. Digitized by éGangotri

a National Information Technology Task Force, which will formulate a draft National Informatics Policy.

The Government will initiate immediate steps to effect reforms in the Public Sector. These will embrace the whole gamut of imaginative restructuring, including transparent disinvestment and reducing PSU losses.

Indian Industry must improve its global competitiveness and strengthen its export muscle. We cannot succeed in Swadeshi development if we do not export. The new Exim Policy seeks to provide special support to our exporters.

There is a social dimension to making Indian Industry competitive. Capital intensive structural adjustments in industrialized countries have given them a competitive edge in global markets. But they have also entailed massive lay-offs.

Many of these countries have welfare schemes to cushion unemployment. India does not. Unemployment in India is more than a statistic. It means hardship and ruin for the unemployed person and his family, sometimes even suicides. Let us keep this dimension in mind when we formulate growth strategies.

In view of the rigorous time table of the World Trade Organization (WTO), I suggest that Industry and the Government sit together and draw up a schedule upto the year 2005. We should then work backwards to closely monitor our forward movement in export promotion.

Let me also say a few words on our policy towards foreign investment. Swadeshi does not mean that we do not value foreign investment. It only means that the bulk of the resources needed for our development must be mobilized by ourselves.

This is why we propose to take necessary steps to raise the rate of savings from 26 per cent of GDP at present to about 30 per cent. However, these domestic resources can and need to be supplemented by foreign resources also.

We welcome foreign investment in areas of our special CC-0. Nanaji Deshmukh Library, BJP, Jammu. Digitized by eGangotri

priority such as infrastructure development, transfer of better management practices, upgradation of product quality to help export capability and critical global marketing linkages.

I would also like to state categorically that no investor who has been given permission hitherto to operate will find the permission withdrawn or narrowed in scope. Government is a continuing entity.

Towards this end, my Government will soon formulate transparent, non-discriminatory and nondiscretionary policies governing Foreign Direct Investment (FDI). The Foreign Investment Promotion Board (FIPB) will be required and also empowered to give a firm "Yes" or "No" answer to every proposal involving FDI within a deadline of 60 days.

The importance of education in achieving our national objectives in growth and employment can hardly be overstated. Enriched human resources are a critical input in any economic activity. In the knowledge-driven economy of today, they have become the most precious form of capital. We need to improve quality and standards at all levels of the Education Pyramid. My Government is fully committed to promoting the cause of Total Literacy through elementary education, informal education and adult literacy.

I urge the CII and other industry organizations to take a lead in giving an impetus to employment-oriented technical education on a massive scale. This will help the country develop much-needed primary and intermediate industry skills to improve the productivity of industry and services in cities, towns and semi-urban areas throughout the country.

As a nation, let all of us think big. I would particularly urge Indian Industry to:

- Draw up big plans. When the big becomes bigger, the small and medium players would grow up to occupy their places.
- Set up manufacturing, marketing and finance units of global CC-0. Nanaji Deshmukh Library, BJP, Jammu. Digitized by eganguits of global

size and eventually global presence.

- Develop brands and products that will rule the world.
- Through all this, plant the proud flag of India on the map of global business and industry in the early years of the 21<sup>st</sup> century.

My government is more than ready to be your partner in the realization of your dreams. Will you be a partner in the realization of my Government's agenda?

I seek the active participation of one and all in this endeavour. I am confident that I'll have it in full measure.

## Important Role of Small-scale Industries in National Development

YESTERDAY, AT THE same venue, I addressed the big industrialists. Today, I am addressing a gathering of entreprenures engaged in small-scale industries. The word "Small" does not augur well with industrialists, but it aptly refers to industry. While addressing the big industrialists, I mentioned about the small-scale industry. Whatever I said yesterday I would like to quote:

"We intend to give vastly higher policy attention to the small-scale industry and the Bhagidari sector, as these are

Free rendering of speech in Hindi at the National Small-scale Industries Conference, New Delhi, 29 April 1998

important sources of self-employment".

I had dwelt at length on the problems of the small-scale industry. I again quote: "This sector makes highest contribution to the country's GDP. My Government will welcome suggestions from the industry organizations as how to provide to this sector critical development inputs such as easy, adequate and timely credit, marketing infrastructure and appropriate technology".

This delineates mainly issues you confront. I might have missed some points which I intend to put before you in brief. It need not be emphasised how significant smal- scale industries are in our national economy in the present context. It need not to be emphasised. However, small-scale industries have been relegated during the last few years. Even in the economic reforms process, which is often widely discussed and we too support economic reforms in the country, the small-scale sector has been lost sight of and the main thrust of the reforms has been put on the corporate sector. No doubt, the corporate sector has its own significance but if we consider employment opportunities or export potential, we cannot ignore this sector which occupies a key position. It is, therefore, essential that this sector has to play an important role in national development.

The need of the hour is the nation's development and rapid development in the right direction. The complacency, which we witness, must be put aside and we must march ahead for facing the challenges. This is what we need.

The small-scale sector is facing problems of credit availability. We will strengthen NABARD and SIDBI and make suitable arrangements to ensure adequate and easy flow of credit. You sell your products to large industries, which include public sector undertakings, but it takes quite a long time for realising your dues from these sectors. The Government will lay down a time frame within which you must get your payment. Your money should not be blocked. You have a limited capital and you carry on your business on the basis of

your day to day earnings. Whereas the big industries have no scarcity of resources. Such large industries must be persuaded to make timely payment to you. I assure you that, if need be, the Government would take whatever further actions are required in this connection.

How do you define small? How small may be treated as small sector industry? This has been debated for quite a long time. What should be the criteria for classifying an industry as a small one? Whether it should depend on the number of persons engaged in the industry or on the amount of capital invested? We have a number of categories of industries and all have the utility and importance in the economy as well. We have to take a comprehensive, not a fragmented view of the entire economy. But at the same time it is also important for us to be aware of the problems of various segments of our economy. While seeking solutions to these problems, we must consider the picture in totality as well as the specific problems. We will be able to find solutions to these problems and succeed.

Last time when I addressed you I had opposed the raising of limit from Rs. 60 lakh to Rs. 3 crore. Considering it to be on the higher side, I had said that the ideal limit for small-scale sector should be Rs. 1 crore. Today I will not say that the limit should be so much as the situation has changed. I would declare that the ceiling on investment in the small-scale industry will be Rs. 1 crore.

Reservation has also been an issue for discussion. Small industries require protection. We have to offer wide protection to our small-scale industry in comparison to the protection offered to multi-national companies. That is why the system of reservation was introduced so that certain areas of production may be earmarked for small-scale industries. There are so many bigger and wider areas for large scale industries to operate in. They should not enter into the sector earmarked for small industry. But what had been the thinking of previous governments on this issue. The Abid Hussain Committee had recommended abolition of reservation. Fortunately the Government did not accept this recommendation. But they did

certain things in the last phase of their tenure, which they should not have done. There is no need to scrap the reservation policy. It must continue. The products of small industry must get protection. Big industry should stay away from them.

There is a list. There may be the question of details which could be discussed with your organization. But the small industry must be protected from the prevalent cut-throat competition. It is important for small industry to use adequate technology. The products which these industries are turning out are of good quality. Such products have wider demand. It is also important that this demand may increase. The quality of the products must improve not only in domestic but in the international markets as well. As such our small-scale industrialists must not feel complacent. They must have an urge to reach new heights. We must tap new markets and make our presence felt in the markets. We will carve a place in domestic as well as international markets on the basis of quality, usefulness and durability of our products. Such a sense of competitiveness must develop.

Many of us are not aware about promoting and publicising the products manufactured by small, micro and cottage industries in the country. Exhibitions and fairs can be organized to create awareness about various products manufactured in small-scale. We will organize such exhibitions in different countries to provide opportunities to small-scale entrepreneurs for exhibiting their products and attract foreign buyers. Boundaries of the world are shrinking and the world is turning into a global village. Whether we like it or not, a new world market is emerging. We will strive hard to capture largest possible segment of this developing world market, while maintaining our national interests above all considerations.

I was astonished to hear that "permit-quota raj" still flourishes. It is an ill-rooted system. It appears that specific, purposeful and firm steps would have to be taken to effect concrete changes in this direction. We are starting the review of obsolete and useless rules and regulations which are proving CC-0. Nanaji Deshmukh Library, BJP, Jammu. Digitized by eGangotri

hinderance in production and in the development of small-scale sector and after the review we will abolish such laws which have outlived their utility. We assure you of this. Laws should be helpful and not detrimental. These should not create obstacles in the way but, on the other hand, they should help in easing the onward journey towards progress. Laws must be used for imbibing a sense of discipline.

We have no intention to establish "speed breakers", but when there is increase in number of accidents, people start demanding for "speed breakers". And, if the speed breaker is there then it is not advisible to drive the vehicle with speed and create problem. As I have already said if rules and regulations are made and laws are made then they should be for streamlining things and not for creating obstacles or detriments.

Your relations with banks whether commercial or cooperative, should not be that of receiver and provider. You are engaged in the task of nation building and contributing towards development of the country. If you require a smaller loan, then you should be ignored and in case you are a heavy loan borrower, then bank should come after you. This tendency should change and it must be relegated to a thing of the past. Small industrialists must be given due respect. "I am contributing to this nation building plan. It does not matter if my contribution is small." We cannot forget the story of the little squirrel which with its small contributions helped Lord Rama in building a large bridge over the sea to conquer Lanka. Those who are engaged in small industry do not beg from banks. They must be treated with respect. In fact there is a need to change the mentality of whole of the nation. It is necessary that with self respect and dignity you must be able to get financial assistance from the banks. The Government too should change its attitude towards you and you should also bring change in your perspective towards the nation.

For the last 50 years, we have been treading a traditionally established path and it appears difficult to come away from it

But we have to overcome this difficulty. We have to change the mentality and intensify human efforts. Our industries provide us with such an opportunity and whatever legal provisions are available should be used to develop our industries. If you feel that what the government is providing, is detrimental then tell us. The Government will keep in touch with your small-scale organization. The General Budget is about to be presented. Your suggestions in view of the Budget will be considered sympathetically. This I assure you. But in case any of your recommendations is not accepted, please consider that it is our inability. Now like Sikander Bakht Sahib, I cannot recite some couplet, but I would stress on one thing that we cannot consider in parts, but we have to view the economy as a whole. The situations which we inherited is not a happy one. People are worried. Deficit is increasing. The previous Government as I have earlier said had done certain things in the last days which it should not have done. "Khush Raho Ahle Watan Hum To Safar Karte Hain" (Be happy countrymen, we are leaving), this may be appropriate for martyrs who were moving towards gallows, but those who are in politics and are in Opposition they have taken such decision, which have put the present government in difficulties. But as I said yesterday we are not to be blamed. On the other hand, we want to look towards future and we have to give shape to the future. We are confident that we will make the future. I am also confident of full cooperation from all of you in this direction.

I am honoured by your invitation to me and my colleague Sikander Bakht Sahib to attend this function. Please accept my sincere thanks. Sikander Bakht Sahib has left the matter of creation of a separate Ministry to me. I would request you too to let me handle this.

## Joint Efforts for Economic Development of the North-East

PERMIT ME TO extend to all of you, on my own behalf and on behalf of my colleagues in the Union Government a sincere and warm welcome. We have gathered here today to address ourselves collectively to certain critical aspects of the economic development in our entire North-Eastern region.

The defining feature of India is "Unity in Diversity" and "Diversity in Unity". Each and every region of India, as also all the regions taken together, exhibit this feature. But nowhere perhaps is the rich mosaic of diversity more prominently seen than in the States of the Union falling in the North-Eastern region.

Nature has endowed this entire region bountifully and in many respects incomparably. It is rich in bio-diversity; its hydropotential is unparalleled; it has petroleum and nature gas along with other minerals and also it has great forest wealth.

But far more than these rich natural endowments, it is the great human wealth of the region whose diversity is simply unmatched by any other part of India, and perhaps the world.

The North-East is an astonishing confluence of diverse ethnic, linguistic, religious and cultural communities. But these communities exhibit not only divesity. Even a cursory look at the diversity reveals a strong underlying national unity.

As we study this diversity more deeply and seriously, the experience of the common thread of national unity binding all the communities becomes more and more fascinating.

Speech at the meeting with the Chief Ministers of North-Eastern States and Sikkim, New Delhi, 8 May 1998

That is why, both the diversity and unity of the various communities in the North-Eastern region are a source of immense national strength. It is on the basis of this potential national strength that we should devise proper strategies to remove the weaknesses in the region's economic development.

Hence, the very first thought I would like to submit before this important gathering is this: My Government does not look upon the North-Eastern region as an area of problems. Rather, we see it as an area of unique potential for India's overall development. I strongly urge each and everyone in the Government, both at the centre and in the states, to adopt this positive perspective.

This does not mean that we either belittle the gravity of the problems in the region or are overawed by it. There are problems. They are long-standing problems. They are multidimensional problems. Some of the problems also have an external focus. And these problems are worsening for want of timely and effective redressal.

We know all this. And the knowledge of this reality worries us. But it also steels my Government's resolve to address these problems squarely and with all the will and vision at our command.

I am aware that this commitment of my government is equally shared by each one of you. This joint commitment is our asset. It is the greatest guarantor that our collective efforts, which will begin with today's meeting, will soon acquire rapid forward movement.

When people in New Delhi think of the North-East, they usually think of the geographic distance, which translates itself into mental distance. When people in the North-East think of New Delhi they usually think of the developmental distance which translates itself into emotional distance.

I am, however, confident that if our minds and hearts work together, we will together be able to bridge and considerably reduce all these distances. The agenda of today's meeting concentrates on the economic development of the region. This has both a narrow focus and also impinges vitally on all other areas of the region's development.

I have always believed that we have to have both an integrative as well as an integrated approach for the entire North-Eastern region. The very diversity of the region, both natural and human as also the diversity of the problems facing the region, demand such an approach.

While discussing the issues of economic development, for example, we cannot entirely lose sight of the political, social, cultural, educational and even security matters that have a direct bearing on the region's economic growth.

We have to especially pay a very serious attention to the internal security issues in the North-East. But this constitutes a major agenda of discussion in itself. I am requesting my colleague, the Hon'ble Home Minister, to convene yet another meeting of the North-Eastern states, which will address itself to the law and order and other internal security aspects only.

In the economic development of the region, I offer you a twofold approach: development of infrastructure, both physical and social and rapid enhancement of sustainable employment.

These are the basic building blocks. Without infrastructure development, the region's economy cannot grow in the desired direction and with the desired speed. Without it, there can be neither employment generation nor social progress.

At the same time, without sustainable employment generation at all-levels of the economy, from skilled to semiskilled and unskilled, we cannot find reliable and tangible solutions to the other chronic problems facing the region.

In infrastructure development, my Government would like to accord the highest priority to improvement of communication links between the North-Eastern region and the rest of India. Without this, we cannot bridge either the geographic distance or the emotional distance separating the North-East from New Delhi.

Today's revolution in communication and the rapid modes of transportation can bridge most distances. Why, therefore, not in the North-East?

I would like to note here that my very first official visit outside Delhi was to Assam, where I had the pleasure of inaugurating the Naranarayan rail-cum-road bridge across River Brahmaputra at Kokrajhar. This project commissioned at a cost of Rs. 330 crore will significantly ease transportation bottlenecks in the region.

New projects in roads, bridges and railway are necessary and will be taken up. But they will take years to complete. However, we now have Information Technology which can bridge distances faster and at a relatively lower cost.

I am happy to note in this context that the Deputy Chairman of the Planning Commission has taken the necessary initiative to bring the North-Eastern region on the Information Highway. As you know, the National Informatics Centre (NIC) under the Planning Commission has already connected all districts in the North-East to its satellite VSAT network, NIC-NET.

NIC has now started augmenting the network for multimedia communication. This will give not only high-speed data communication but also voice communication and video conferencing facility between the state capitals, districts and the national capital. This is a two-year project and service will commence from the state capitals from August 1998.

My Government will also initiate necessary action including examining afresh the possibilities of reopening of direct communication and trade linkages with neighbouring countries.

Simultaneously with these initiatives we need to lay much greater emphasis on development of the entire social infrastructure of the states of the region. That is why health, housing and education should be our additional points of policy and programmatic emphasis.

The North-Bastern Course ! (NEC) but softh effects to play a

far more meaningful role in socio-economic transformation of the North-Eastern region than has been the case so far. And it has to do so with a sense of urgency and a sense of mission. My Government, I assure you, will display both.

This is the guiding principle behind our decision to restructure the North-Eastern Council. As a necessary first step, Sikkim would become a full-fledged member of the North-Eastern Council. Necessary legislation for this purpose would be introduced in the coming session of Parliament

Plan allocations to the North-Eastern Council would accordingly be considerably augmented. In the process, the North-Eastern Council would be further strengthened and given a new orientation.

The Deputy Chairman, Planning Commission, will, after the needed legislation become the Chairman of North-Eastern Council. And this Council will deal exclusively with the developmental issues of the states of the North-East, in an integrated regional and national perspective.

The North-Eastern Council will have to shoulder the responsibility for speedy implementation of all important infrastructure projects. I would particularly like to emphasize the overriding importance of implementing developmental projects within the scheduled time.

We are examining the feasibility of creating a Central Pool of Resources (CPR) which, in turn, will give critical additional support for an accelerated implementation of projects in the entire region.

This pool, created from the unspent balance of the allocated expenditure of 10 per cent of the budgets of the concerned Central Ministries, could well amount to around Rs. 1500 crore annually.

Evidently, therefore, this will be an important additional resource for accelerated implementation of inter-state, infrastructure and employment-oriented projects in the region.

And that is also where the North-Eastern Council can play a more productive role.

I have no doubt a restructured North-Eastern Council would be able to give a new developmental thrust to the entire region.

Another important developmental issue I would like to raise today is about the best possible utilization of our resources. I need hardly emphasize that mere infusion of financial resources cannot by itself achieve our developmental goals.

The key is timely and efficient implementation. Apart from the absorption capacity of each state, there are also very relevant aspects of priorities, inter-linkages between sectors, the duration of each scheme or project, the maintenance of assets thus created, returns in financial as well as social terms in the quickest possible span of time and the widest feasible spread of benefits.

An impression persists that too many schemes, projects and initiatives have been undertaken, no doubt with the best of intentions, but that the results have not always been commensurate with the efforts made. That is why we have to realign our investment priorities and modalities of implementation.

What I would like to propose is that we move away from attaching exclusive importance to allotment of sums of money alone, as the only proof of an initiative of development, to one of a more comprehensive and result-oriented approach.

This new approach should be based on specific projects, with realistic expectations of results which can be executed transparently and quickly. This approach must also aim, in a much more focused way, at the creation of sustainable employment opportunities.

Only this approach would be fully in keeping with a systematic nandomeaningly buplanning type occasion with

bringing in much better results; particularly when severe constraints of fiscal resources confront the country.

As a first step, therefore I am directing the Planning Commission to physically identify such projects as are near completion and can, with balancing funds, be brought to the delivery stage. These would receive high priority for completion. I would welcome your ideas and suggestions for improvements in their project implementation.

In this context another important area which needs our attention is improving the delivery system; also greater transparency in implementation. Our citizens, for whose benefits, after all, the various programmes and projects are implemented should be made more aware of the project features, the funds provided, the executing agency and the target dates of completion.

Involvement of citizens in formulation as well as implementation of plans is useful. Fortunately, in the North-Eastern states, grassroot-level institutions such as Autonomous District Councils, Village Panchayat Boards and traditional tribal formations are active in many areas.

Panchayati Raj Institutions (PRIs) in the plains areas of Assam, Tripura and Manipur also need to be more fully involved in the development programmes. Let us, the Planning Commission, the North-Eastern Council and the states of the North-East, jointly evolve an effective implementation and monitoring mechanism.

As I have said before, the North-East is rich in forests and extraordinarily well-endowed with bio-diversity. We fully understand that forests are the mainstay of the economy of the North-Eastern states.

The sustainability of the forests to support the economy in perpetuity, is necessary. The Forest Conservation Act, 1980 is one of the steps to ensure it. I am aware of the current difficulties being faced in this regard. My Government is committed to evolving a suitable mechanism for eliminating these difficulties.

I would like to express my sense of happiness, once again, at being here with all of you. I am confident that our meeting today will usher in a more fruitful phase in our joint efforts at the economic development of the North-Eastern region. It is in our hands to realize our aspirations. Let us jointly do it.

## Chartered Accountants in the Liberalization Era

I AM HAPPY to be here this evening amidst all of you a gathering of esteemed professionals—to share with you the joy and excitement of the beginning of your golden jubilee year celebrations. It gives me pleasure to inaugurate your ambitious programme of activities in various fields for the next two years to commemorate 50 years of existence of the Institute of Chartered Accountants of India.

I must first of all compliment the profession of chartered accountants for having served India well in the past five decades. The prestige your profession has acquired is on account of the discipline, diligence and dedication which have become the hallmark of your profession. What is more, you have been able to transmit that sense of discipline and diligence to much of the financial sphere in which you operate.

With the growth of the Indian economy, your profession has made rapid strides in the last few decades. And spearheading this growth has been your illustrious Institute. Your Institute, which had a mere 1,700 members 50 years ago,

Speech at the Golden Jubilee Celebration of the Institute of Chartered Accountants of India, New Delhi, 1 July 1998

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has now over 82,000 members. It is estimated that the number will grow to around 1,50,000 by the year 2010.

It is not just the numerical growth that is impressive. Indian chartered accountants have succeeded in meeting the rapidly changing demands of the Indian economy in the era of liberalization and globalization. This could not have been possible without your Institute laying a special emphasis on continuous education and training of your members. This progressive mindset—the mindset to learn new concepts and adopt new practices—provides a model for other professions.

Another feature of your Institute which gladdens me is that it is perhaps the only Institute in the world, which undertakes the complete range of activities relating to its members and students. I am particularly happy to note that you have made special endeavours to articulate accounting and auditing standards and improve the quality of corporate reporting in India.

The goal of this standards improvement programme should be two-fold: one, to ensure that not a single rupee is taken from the tax payers' money. Two, to enhance the quality and credibility of financial and other information produced and used in the private and public sectors, as also in the Government.

We are living in the age of professionalism. This is an age in which not only the economy, but more and more areas of social life too are being managed by professionals. It is the professional's expertise and skill that lend the cutting edge to the level of technology which has assumed the greatest importance in modern societies. The efficiency with which a nation moves is the direct result of the skill and knowledge of its professionals. Indeed, so vital have they become in the overall scheme of nation-building, that even politicians are now required to imbibe the approach of professionalism.

Now, I must confess that I am not a professional in the sense in which we have been using it, even though politics has been my life-long profession. Yet, I believe I can offer some

useful thoughts before this distinguished gathering of chartered accountants.

First of all, I am sure all of you will agree with me that professional ethics is an integral part of professionalism. It is the crucial determinant of the overall health of the nation. It has rightly been said that, if professional capability provides the "brains" or the "grey matter" of the body of the society, it is the ethics that constitutes the "heart".

I would therefore emphasize that the task before you is clear cut. You have to develop your technical excellence to levels which must compare with international standards—indeed, the standards of Indian chartered accountancy should exceed global standards. This is possible in an atmosphere that attracts the best people and encourages trust, team spirit and a personal commitment to excellence.

At the same time, there cannot be any laxity with regard to ethical standards. For the very existence of the society is dependent on them. The principles of integrity and objectivity are as important as competence. And this applies not only to CAs and other business professionals, it applies equally to professional politicians too.

My second appeal to you is that your profession must pay even greater attention to increasing efficiencies at all levels in the national economy. Our success in rapidly reaching our national goals depends much on our ability to build a modern corporate structure, an efficient infrastructure and a motivated and dedicated human capital.

We would require mobilization of economic resources by enhancing investors' confidence, optimal utilization of available resources and management of risks associated with growth. Your profession has to act as a catalyst in this process.

As I say this, my focus is not only on the corporate sector, important though it is. All of us know that the success of schemes for improving the lot of those who are yet to receive the benefits of economic reforms will depend much on the performance of CC-0. Nanaji Deshmukh Library, BJP, Jammu. Digitized by eGangotri

the rural and informal sectors of the economy.

We simply cannot ignore anymore the need to introduce transparency and accountability in the vast sums of money which the Government spends each year in various development programmes. I would particularly suggest that you advise the Government in the area of monitoring the end use of public funds and in devising systems which improve the performance of local institutions.

Lastly, I urge you to develop a global reach. India has chartered accountancy firms and training programmes, which are world-class. You must extend your operations beyond our national boundaries. Also, Indian accounting firms should begin to offer a wide range of consultancy services, as is done by the big global names in this field. In this context, I am happy to note that your Institute has taken initiatives to develop the profession of accountancy in other countries where the profession is in its infancy. I understand that it has signed an MoU with the newly-born Institute of Chartered Accountants of Nepal (ICAN) to provide all support in establishing that Institute. Initiatives like these will not only help your profession, but they will also earn a lot of goodwill for India.

In the end, I once again congratulate you all on this joyous occasion. May your Institute now set its sights on the next 50 years, which I am sure will witness India's emergence as a major global power.

Before I conclude, I would like to refer to the proposal or suggestion about the Service Tax. I am not the Finance Minister. I did not impose it. It cannot withdraw it. But I can recommend your case very strongly to the Finance Minister. Kindly show me the way in which the Service Tax will remain intact but Chartered Accountants will be out of it.

## Application of Advanced Technology in Agriculture

It IS A matter of great pleasure for me to extend a warm welcome to all of you to the 69th Annual General Meeting of the ICAR Society.

As President of the ICAR Society, I thank all the members of the Society and the special invitees who have spared their valuable time to attend this meeting. The participation, support and interest of the Agriculture Ministers of all the State Governments during the last thirty years has enabled the ICAR Society to provide the country with modern agricultural technologies and skilled manpower.

As a result, the dire predictions of large-scale starvation in India, made by some of the western experts in the past, have been falsified. The country has achieved food security. Much of the credit for this goes to the Green Revolution. The Green Revolution has been followed by White and Blue Revolutions as well. Thus, in this year of Golden Jubilee Celebrations of India's Independence, we can look back upon our accomplishments with a good deal of satisfaction.

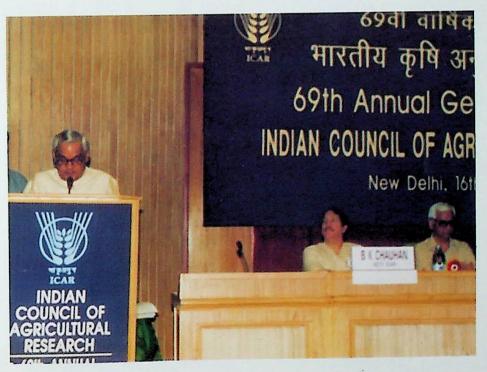
I feel proud to say that the Indian Council of Agricultural Research (ICAR) Society has played a pivotal role in these accomplishments. It has been at the forefront in guiding this development in which scientists, policy makers, kisans, extension workers, and input and credit supply agencies have worked in unison. They deserve our appreciation.

There is, however, no scope for self-congratulation. Measured against the needs of our Society, as also against the inherent potential of Indian agriculture, we have to admit that our achievements so far have been very modest.

Yields per hectare of major crops in India are considerably lower than those in other countries with comparable climatic conditions. Food production has not kept pace with the growth in population. There are many Indian homes where persistent hunger is still a reality.

We, therefore, need to take a self-critical view of what the Government has achieved, and is yet to achieve, in the farm sector. Let us accept the fact that much of the progress in Indian agriculture has happened because of our hardworking and enterprising farmers.

Governmental policies and programmes have helped, but far more could have been achieved on the farm front, had all our agencies adopted a less bureaucratic and more farmer-



Prime Minister Shri Atal Bihari Vajpayee addressing the 69th AGM of ICAR Society, New Delhi, 16 July 1998

friendly approach.

The challenge before all of us, after five decades of Independence, is simply this: How quickly can we make India hunger-free? How will we be able to double food production in the next ten years? How can we make India a major exporter of food products?

These questions are important because, as we all know, agriculture is the basis of our national economy. Unless we rejuvenate Indian agriculture, we cannot substantially achieve any of our developmental goals.

Specifically, our GDP growth target of 7 to 8 per cent for the Ninth Five Year Plan cannot be accomplished unless we achieve 4 to 5 per cent growth in agriculture. The growth in the farm sector has to mainly come through productivity increase by application of science and technology.

Higher investment in agricultural research and education is no doubt needed. Equally important, however, is the need for better utilization of the financial and human resources that are already available to us.

The National Agenda for Governance has accorded the highest priority to the agricultural and rural sector. This commitment has already found reflection in the enhanced allocation for this sector in the current Budget.

I have been informed that the draft National Agricultural Policy will be finalized soon. The three-pronged policy will focus on the optimal use of land, water and bio-resources in a sustainable manner.

The Government will soon unveil a major initiative to integrate wasteland development, watershed management and bio-resources development in an integrated manner.

The Policy will seek to give a major boost to agro-processing industries and agro-business in rural areas to bring about value-addition and increase farm income. It will also help solve rural unemployment and minimize migration of rural people at the mass and yesting sammu. Digitized by eGangotri

Here, I would like to share with you some of our thoughts on the proposed policy measures:

ONE: The Green Revolution has left out our dryland areas, which constitute nearly 63 per cent of our cultivated area. In these areas, conservation and scientific use of water must receive a very high priority in the national agenda for sustainable agricultural development. On-farm water management and energy management will hold the key to improve production.

TWO: In the future, agricultural growth has to be managed in a more participatory mode. Involvement of people in the activities like tree planting, contour bunding, construction of small storages, levelling and reshaping of land, construction of field channels and control of grazing.

THREE: Farming is still a big gamble as it is largely dependent on the monsoons. All kinds of risks dominate the farmers' lives. Insulation against these risks is important if the lives of farmers have to be improved. For this, a comprehensive insurance scheme is being chalked out under which farmers taking loans will have to compulsorily take out an insurance policy.

FOUR: The Government proposes to introduce Kisan Credit Cards and speedy enactment of the Multi-State Cooperatives Acts. A new method of settlement of nonperforming assets in the agricultural sector is also being worked out to de-clog credit flow to this sector. The Rural Infrastructure Development Fund of NABARD will be given an additional Rs. 500 crore to provide a thrust to credit flow.

FIVE: Developments in biotechnology have opened vast new opportunities for application in agriculture and animal husbandry. I urge our scientists at the ICAR to master these technologies to boost farm productivity. But these have to be used in harmony with the nature's processes and balances.

SIX: I am indeed pleased to learn that all the ICAR laboratories, numbering over 80, have brought out their perspective Plans and the Vision: 2020 document. It is a commendable job for not only visualizing the trends 20 years

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in advance but also planning and working towards those goals.

Our scientists need fresh infusion of skill upgradation, international exposure and, above all, a congenial environment for sharpening their creativity and improving the quality of output. An innovative HRD programme is, therefore, critical.

I have enumerated only a few issues here and there may be many more. I call upon all the honourable members of ICAR Society to provide us with directions and suggestions towards our mission of taking Indian agriculture to commanding heights in the early decades of the 21st century.

Once again, I on my own behalf and on behalf of the Council, welcome you all and thank you for being with us today.

# Role of Handloom Sector in Economic Management

I FEEL GREAT pleasure to be with you this morning. This is the first conference of the State Ministers in charge of the handloom sector since my Government assumed office. At the outset, therefore, I extend a warm welcome to all of you.

I have been informed that the All India Handloom Ministers' Conference is being held after a long gap. I, therefore, appreciate the initiative taken by the Textile Minister, Shri Rana, for convening this meeting.

Handloom is an important sector of our economy. It is also an important sector of our society—if we measure importance

in terms of the number of human hands that work in this sector, the larger number of mouths that depend on this sector and the social strata to which these families belong.

Handloom is the largest unorganized economic activity in India, next only to agriculture. It is an integral part of the rural and semi-rural socio-economic structure. With 3.8 million looms, this sector today provides employment to about ten million persons, out of which 32 per cent are Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes. Equally revealing is the fact that 60 per cent of those working on handlooms are women. The sector accounts for about one-fourth of the total cloth production in the country. Moreover, employment in this sector is spread nearly all over the country.

Thus, we see how critical the handloom sector is to the simultaneous realization of several seemingly disparate national objectives: employment generation, rural development, social justice and empowerment, women's welfare, preservation and promotion of artisanry, and checking the migration of rural families to urban areas. Even a small but significant improvement in the economy of the handloom sector will result in tangible progress in all these directions.

Hence, the first thought I would like to convey to the participants of this gathering is: Let all of us—both the Centre and the States—keep in mind the centrality of the handloom sector in our overall economic management. All too often in this country, those who are unorganized also end up being uncared for. If we want to see India as a caring nation, if we want our governments to be seen as caring governments, then we must begin to deal with this sector with far greater attention, empathy, and accountability than has been the case so far.

The National Agenda for Governance, which is the policy guideline for my Government, has clearly proclaimed our commitment to the handloom sector. It states, "In addition to financial support institutions, we will bring into being other institutional systems for providing services, technology and marketing facilities for artisans, the small-scale, village, khadi, powerloom, handloom, handicrafts, and such other industries. This and the agriculture sector are an untapped source with unlimited scope for generation of employment."

I am sure these words articulate the commitment of the State Governments, too. Hence, let us work with a common approach and single-minded determination to translate our shared commitment into visible action.

During the last four months, the Union Ministry of Textiles has been considering a number of measures for improving the lot of handloom weavers. The Government has also taken the initiative to formulate a new Textile Policy, in which the handloom sector will find its rightful place. This Conference is a step forward in this direction, since it provides a platform for interchange of views and experiences among the various States.

In India, a handloom weaver is not just an economic agent adding his mite to the GDP. Rather, he symbolizes the country's vibrant sartorial ethos. The handloom industry has a long tradition of excellence. The image of the loom is a feature of poetic tradition dating back to *Vedas* in which there are references to the marvelously woven tissues and sumptuously inwrought apparel.

Notwithstanding its antiquity, handloom is not a fossil of a bygone era but a living legacy of unrivaled craftmanship that has displayed innate resilience to withstand and adapt itself to the demands of modern times. Each region in India has typical technical skills and variations.

The rich zari brocades of Benaras, the silk of Kancheepuram, Balucharis of Bengal, Chanderis of Madhya Pradesh, Balrampuram of Kerala, Gadwals of Andhra Pradesh are manifestations of this rich legacy. While the famous Indian Ikats of Gujarat, Andhra Pradesh, and Orissa have attracted attention all over world, the Lasingphee and Muga of North Eastern States have fascinated the users for ages. This precious tradition must be preserved.

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I would like to make a special mention about the North Eastern region. The North-Eastern States account for 1.645 million domestic looms and 389,000 commercial looms and thus account for more than one-third of the total looms in the country. Most of the weavers in the North-Eastern States are women. There is an imperative need to look into their problems of input supply, design development, working capital requirements, marketing of products, etc., so that the benefits reach the weavers. I would urge the ministers from the North-Eastern States to avail maximum advantage of the ongoing schemes.

The handloom sector has many natural advantages, whose leveraging would greatly elevate its overall performance. Handloom weavers do not use scarce resources. They do not need large capital. The need for streamlining and intensifying handloom activity is self evident, on account of the fact that it is highly labour intensive. The capital output ratio is lower than most of other small and village industries. It makes little demand on conventional sources of energy and has no adverse ecological effect. In fact, financial, administrative and managerial support to handloom, handicrafts, khadi, village industries, and small-scale industries will accelerate GDP growth rate with comparatively lower costs to the economy.

The handloom industry today may look small in terms of its tools and technology but plays a pivotal rule in our economy in terms of its employment potential. It is a natural productive asset and tradition at cottage level, which has sustained and grown by transfer of skills from one generation to the other. It is, therefore, imperative that systematic and adequate steps are taken to ensure that the persons employed in the handloom industry continue to derive their sustenance from it. It is equally important all those who are partly engaged get full time employment.

I am told that there has been an adverse impact on handloom weavers due to the growth of the powerloom sector in recent years. It is being said in certain quarters that handlooms should be gradually converted into powerlooms. The approach to convert handlooms to powerlooms *en masse* is neither practicable nor desirable. The handloom sector has an edge over the powerloom and mill sectors in its ability to commercially produce the goods in small volume, quick switchover to new designs and creation of exquisite designs. All the three sectors—handloom, powerloom, and mill—will have to co-exist in dynamic and natural harmony.

The handloom sector is facing many problems today, and these problems are accentuated by its dispersed and unorganized nature. It is beset with obsolete technology; lack of modernization, quality upgradation, and research and development; inadequate availability of inputs; lack of design and product innovations; non-availability of adequate and timely credit; and replication of handloom products of powerloom at a lower cost added with restricted competition in the international market.

The Government has, therefore, undertaken implementation of a number of schemes and programmes for the development of the sector and socio-economic welfare of the handloom weavers. These are basically in the fields of input supply such as yarn, dyes and chemicals; pre and post loom operations; production oriented support; modernization of looms; design and product development; infrastructural support; dyeing and quality upgradation, marketing, and exports.

There is no dearth of schemes at National and State levels. What is important is to implement these schemes most effectively and efficiently and to organize convergence of critical inputs at the workplace of a weaver. If necessary, a dispassionate and candid assessment of the shortcomings in existing policies and programmes and their implementation should be made and a complete overhauling of the delivery systems, including restructuring of the schemes, may be considered keeping the ultimate beneficiary, the weaver, as the centerpiece.

I urge the Ministers and officers to constantly review and reorient these schemes and programmes to benefit the weavers. Let us remember that, but for effective institutional support,

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the handloom industry may wither away and its traditional craftsmanship, skill and designs may get consigned to history.

At the same time, I would also like to urge you to consider how we can enhance weavers' own democratic participation in the institutions that conceptualize and implement these programmes. Without the active involvement of primary producers, these schemes and programmes may suffer from corruption and bureaucratization.

The ultimate success of these programmes will necessarily depend on State Governments. The Central Government cannot reach out to the handloom weavers located in the villages all over the country. That is why, almost all the handloom schemes are implemented through the Governments of the States and Union Territories. The Government of India has also noted that owing to the ways and means position of the State Governments, schemes in which States were required to participate on matching basis are often facing constraints. I would urge upon the State Governments to budget and release adequate funds so that the programmes do not suffer.

The State Governments will also have to see that when the projects are sanctioned by the Government of India and funds are released, the fund is immediately passed on to the implementing agencies to promote the interests of weavers.

Let me conclude by stating that we should aim at nothing less than the resurgence and revitalization of the handloom sector. This alone would enable it to be one of the cornerstones of the economic growth of our country.

With these words, I inaugurate the All India Handloom Ministers' Conference.

## Government-Industry Partnership for Growth

I WELCOME ALL of you to this first meeting of the Advisory Council on Trade and Industry.

This Council is about partnership and trust. And building bridges between industry and Government. To understand your perceptions, to share our views and interact with candor. Not merely about what you expect from Government or Government expects from you. But jointly embark on a course of action.

A course that will fulfil the underlying objectives I had outlined at the National Conference and Annual Session of the CII on April 28, namely, "Together create a mindset Revolution to Harmonize the Objectives of Economic Liberalization and Social Liberalization".

A lot has happened since the April Meeting. Several important initiatives have been taken like:

- 1) Initiatives in the Power Sector and counter-guarantees for Fast Track Projects.
- 2) New schemes announced in the Budget to resolve disputes.
- 3) Some important legislations introduced in Parliament like FEMA.
- 4) A new National Housing Policy.
- 5) Implementation of the Task Force on Information Technology.
- 6) A credible Export Package.But a lot remains to be done.

The Indian economy has inherent resilience and strength.

India, China, and Taiwan will be among the few countries to show positive growth in the Asian region in 1998-99.

We have overcome the negative impact of sanctions.

The success of the Resurgent India Bonds was the demonstration of the faith that our NRIs have in the strength of our economy.

Seen in the context of a depressed world market, marked by economic crises in South East Asia, Japan and Russia, GDP growth rate of around six per cent with still single digit inflation, satisfactory agricultural output, stable reserves, and signs of further industrial revival is by any reckoning no mean achievement.

But there is no room for complacency. Not merely because we need to achieve much more but also because the international environment is becoming increasingly difficult and uncertain.

In this environment, we must work towards a Seven Point approach for this council.

First, there is need to rekindle the spirit of enterprise. Indian enterpreneurs have excelled. They are second to none. We need to adopt measures that will dispel lingering fears and fortify confidence. We must adopt measures that build optimism in our expectations.

Second, we must focus on a comprehensive strategy to deal with the debilitating impact of a global meltdown. And to demonstrate that India has an attractive economic prospect for domestic and foreign investors.

Third, focus on measures that can enhance the productivity and competitiveness of Indian companies to face the increasing challenges of globalization.

Fourth, to focus on some immediate concerns. Concerns which are in your mind and ours. How do we get on to a higher growth path? A path that will impart a new momentum. What tangible steps can be taken which will, say:

- 1) Substantially increase investment in infrastructure.
- 2) Lead to a revival of the capital market.
- 3) Restructure public enterprises for greater efficiency and productivity while continuing the disinvestment process through a transparent mechanism.

Fifth, to refresh the Government's communication strategy. To enable not only timely fine-tuning of our policies to create awareness about our programmes. But also, monitor and ensure that the benefits of the development percolate to the grassroots for alleviating poverty.

Sixth, to invest and foster "Knowledge as an industry". Through investing in skills. And in Human Resource Development. And to improve the quality of life index as contained in the World Development Report.

Finally, a strategy which can enable:

- 1) A GDP growth of seven per cent a year for the next three years and eight percent thereafter;
- Industrial growth of ten per cent a year is achievable next year and twelve to thirteen percent thereafter;
- Export to grow at fifteen to twenty per cent a year in dollar terms;
- Policy leading to high employment with modest inflation.
   This is a big agenda.

We need to organize ourselves purposefully and gainfully. So that the Council can address issues both in generality and CC-0. Nanaji Deshmukh Library, BJP, Jammu. Digitized by eGangotri

in sectors and segments which can enable us to move in this direction.

I have made some general observations and would request you to give your reactions not only on what needs to be done in the immediate future but also over a longer span. And on the sort of issues and procedures which we need to adopt to optimize the benefits of your presence here. The presence of India's best entrepreneurs. And whose presence we greatly value in this Council.

I look forward to hearing your views.

### Priority to Social Sector Development Planning

IT GIVES ME great pleasure to welcome you to this first meeting of the Economic Advisory Council. I hope that in the long run, this Council would be a good sounding board for inculcating awareness in Government on the different points of view on key economic issues. And more than that, in shaping perceptions on policy changes, regarding issues of immediate concern as well as those of long-term relevance.

Like all Governments, it is difficult to get away from the short-term. And from a somewhat excessive pre-occupation with issues which are in everyone's mind—in yours and mine. And we do so at a time when the global economic scene is both complex and uncertain. There is no unique prescription. Nor a universally accepted consensus on the malaise itself. Its symptoms are evident in various forms.

Speech at the first meeting of the Economic Advisory Council, New Delhi, 15 October 1998

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Large parts of Asia remain in serious economic difficulties triggered no doubt, by a financial crisis which spilled over into a crisis of Balance of Payments and Exchange Rate with significant contraction of GDP. And no one with confidence can assert that the worst is over. Japan, which was an important engine of growth, is in serious difficulties. More recently, Russia has been engulfed by crisis. The "banking bubble" which surfaced some years ago was over-blown by unsuccessful efforts to seek an easy way out of the problem.

Economic growth in industrial countries also shows signs of slowing down. Their capital markets have also been affected. International consensus on what needs to be done has eluded all of us.

International economic institutions have yet to fully come to terms with the causes, consequences and prognosis of the deep shadow the economic meltdown has cast on the global economic system.

Where does India stand in all this?

There are obvious positives.

Recent data from the Department of Statistics that has undertaken an exercise under the Special Data Dissemination Standards has indicated that the GDP for the year 1998-99 will grow at 6.3 per cent as against 5.1 per cent in 1997-98.

Perhaps, apart from China no other major country would be achieving this rate of growth with relatively modest inflation, low current account deficit, and a balanced economic growth.

Our short-term debt is low, our reserves today are higher than last year, and external markets are relatively orderly despite all the problems around us.

This may give us some comfort but it cannot be an alibi for complacency.

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of problems in infrastructure, in exports, fiscal areas, in rederegulation of public enterprises and in reducing price rise.

We have to get to the growth path, which is needed to address poverty alleviation.

Enable fruits of growth to percolate to the grassroots.

And as I have said earlier:

- Get GDP growing at 7 to 8 per cent over the next three years.
- Industrial growth at 12 to 13 per cent in the medium term.
- Exports at 12 to 15 per cent in dollar terms.
- Ensure high levels of investments, both public and private in the agriculture sector while giving a boost to agroprocessing industries.
- For achieving all these, clearly, long term policy changes are necessary.

But today, I have to focus on some key concerns:

FIRST, clearly the short-term.

What can we do to reactivate growth impulses in Indian industry? How to improve confidence levels? Allay misgivings and impart buoyancy to investor decision-making.

How to kick-start the economy without generating further fiscal pressures and rekindle inflationary forces? How to get public and private investment to move in tandem which can excite the urge for growth?

SECOND, how to further strengthen our financial sector and make it more resilient to shocks This is not unconnected with efforts to avoid what is now described as the "Contagion effect". The Asian crisis began by severe weaknesses and overextension of the financial and banking system.

We must take immediate measures for further CC-0. Nanaji Deshmukh Library, BJP, Jammu. Digitized by eGangotri

strengthening the financial sector. Improve the quality of portfolios, reduce the problem on Non-performing Assets and ensure that infrastructure receives adequate finance.

THIRD, Long-term fiscal policies.

I do not think there is a magic number—an ideal figure of fiscal deficit.

I am aware of the intellectual debate on whether in times of distress one can loosen concerns on fiscal deficit to get growth moving.

But looking to India, there is in fact need to rein the fiscal deficit which appears unacceptably high.

This requires concerted action.

- To reduce Government expenditure.
- Improve the efficiency of public expenditure with a sensible expenditure management policy.
- · Get greater revenue buoyancy.
- Improve the Tax-to-GDP ratio.
- · Widen the tax net for direct taxes.
- Eliminate exemptions and plug leakages.
- And undertake public sector restructuring with a credible disinvestment programme. A programme not for merely garnering resources for Government. But to improve the productivity and efficiency of the public enterprises.

The losses of these enterprises is a fiscal drain and we cannot afford this. Unless fiscal deficit is brought under control, macro management will continue to be difficult. With consequences for B.O.P. management, creating inflationary pressures and expectations with shrinking availablity of credit and cost for their Poshnika Litraly Selecter mu. Digitized by eGangotri

How does one combine the need to kick-start the economy for getting on a higher growth path and yet rein in fiscal deficit to acceptable levels?

FOURTH, issues connected with Monetary Policy and Balance of Payment strategy.

Fortunately, our present policies in a world of volatile exchange rates have kept our forex markets relatively orderly. We have taken timely action in the form of Resurgent India Bonds to strengthen our reserves and are not under short-term pressures. But we all know that there is the medium-term, a financial gap. Measures to bridge this gap is not unconnected with increased flow of direct foreign investment, a pick up in the export momentum and positive FII flows.

In addition to the external dimension, there is the whole issue of availability of credit for industrial activity at a cost, which is affordable and consistent with the need to reactivate the growth momentum.

FIFTH, the issue of sequencing and pace of reform measures requires a broad national consensus.

- Which are the reform initiatives which should receive priority?
- What should be their pace?
- How should they be sequenced?

Our response to these would need to be India specific, since global benchmarks could be misleading.

SIXTH, and not the least. Every year when the World Development Report comes out, it serves as a rude reminder of the systemic neglect of the social sector and Human Resource Development reflected in the Quality of Life Index.

This needs a reversal by resetting our goals and according the requisite priority to social sector development in our planning priority.

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Finally, let me say that there are many other long-term issues connected with Human Resource Development, demographic policy, a sensible labour policy and the restructuring of the planning process.

These should receive our attention in subsequent meetings.

For today's meeting, I have flagged some issues which are of immediate concern and on which a consensus among you will help Government in articulating policies to effectively address these concerns.

I look forward to hearing your views.

### Government Asserts its Commitment to Economic Reforms

As I STAND here to inaugurate the 71st annual session of the Federation of Indian Chambers of Commerce and Industry (FICCI), I am struck by the awareness that we are indeed at a turning point in world history.

These are difficult times for Indian and global business. A massive churning process is taking place in the world economy. The name of this Samudra Manthan in the modern era is

Globalization.

Globalization has brought in unprecedented turbulence, but trapped in that turbulence is also the hope of *amrit* (nectar). It is a moment when the promise of a new phase of long-term prosperity and progress lies in the womb of short-term uncertainty.

Today, the process of churning has brought the rhetoric and realities of globalization face to face. Some of these realities are indeed harsh and painful.

The international financial markets find themselves in a crisis whose threatening waves have rapidly travelled from local to regional to global waters. There is a distinct downtrend in global trade. Many national economies around the world have shrunk, some even registering a negative growth. For the first time in post-World War Two history, even rich nations have begun to worry that the comforting certainties of their continued prosperity are not foolproof.

Does this mean that globalization itself is a flawed idea, fit only for a quick burial? I know that there are people, both within India and outside, who say so—and I also know that they represent a minority opinion.

Globalization is a historical reality. And, nations cannot prosper in isolation. Forging mutually beneficial and cooperative relations is necessary for growth and prosperity for all.

Even Professor Amartya Sen, the winner of this year's Nobel Prize for Economics—and who, as we all know, is one of the sharpest critics of the failures of globalization—has forthrightly argued that globalization can also be a boon for humanity, if coupled with credible social-sector safety nets.

At the same time, history itself is teaching both business and political leaders in the world what Indian philosophy has explained ages ago: namely, there is no single exclusive path to reach the Truth. similarly, there can be no single model or solution to the problems of economic development.

Each nation has to pave its own path, based on its own concrete national realities and priorities. This is what Swadeshi means. Globalization and Swadeshi are, thus, complementary and not contradictory to each other.

India's strategic response to the reality of globalization has to be two-fold: external and internal, both designed to achieve a common goal—namely, to strengthen the global economy and the Indian economy.

Externally, we advocate, with even greater vigour and conviction than in the past, our case for changing the present iniquitous and unsound architecture of the world economy. The World Bank and the International Monetary Fund were set up in the pre-globalization era and and at a time when most countries in the world were either not free or had just won their independence.

India seeks an innovative restructuring of the Bretton Woods twins, to reflect the needs of today's interdependent world and also to better achieve the goal in their founding charter namely, "The Achievement of Sustainable Economic Development and Reducing Poverty".

We similarly seek a radical change in the approach and functioning of other institutions such as rating agencies and global commercial banks.

The UN is contemplating a major international conference two years from now to suggest a new policy framework for the global financial system. India will make an important contribution to the deliberations at this conference and in discussions which will take place in other fora.

Towards this end, the Government is formulating a sixpoint conceptual framework for the innovative design of a new global financial architecture.

The six pillars of the new architecture will reflect the need for:

Managing large capital flows without excessive volatility;
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- Speedy decision-making and timely corrective action in the face of instantaneous electronic fund transfers across the globe;
- Transparency among all the players—public and private, government and quasi-government, in developed and developing countries;
- Achievement of equity in an inherently unequal world economic order;
- Timely preventive steps against the "contagion effect"; and,
- An ability to introduce adaptation and innovation in a fast changing financial system.

We shall soon present this for a national debate, in which the views of the opposition parties and all sections of business, industry, and labour will be invited. We shall also engage constructively with other countries in an effort to promote an international consensus for restructuring of the financial system.

It is not just the global financial system that is demanding radical restructuring. Our own economy is in urgent need of deeper, broader, and faster reforms. My Government is fully committed to this objective.

I can say with considerable satisfaction that our record in taking initiatives in the economic sphere is superior to that of any other government in recent memory, for a comparable initial period of six months in office.

In this period, we have demonstrated our resolve to put the Indian economy onto a higher growth path and dispelled all doubts as to our commitment to the philosophy and policies of liberalizations. My Government has not gone back on any of the reform initiatives of the earlier governments, but has added a new momentum to the reform process.

Delicensing, decontrol, and debureaucratization have been my personal belief long before I came to the present office. My Government has delicensed sugar, petroleum, and coal/lignite from the purview of the IDR Act. With this, virtually the entire Indian industry, barring those in strategic areas, has been freed from the regime of industrial licensing. Technology inputs are being virtually freed from Government approval processes to facilitate free inflows.

Intellectual Property Rights are a critical need in the emerging knowledge-based economy. My Government's commitment to the protection of IPR has been demonstrated by acceding to the Paris Convention for the Protection of Intellectual Property on September 7, 1998. We have also declared our resolve to meet the obligations on TRIPs under the World Trade Organization.

Information Technology is revolutionizing every facet of life including, most dramatically, the national and global economy. It has been an area of high priority for the Government. The IT Action Plan prepared by the National Task Force on Information Technology and Software Development, with 108 recommendations to make India an IT superpower, has been accepted by the Government.

Many of these recommendations have already been implemented. Others, such as giving a major boost to hardware manufacturing in India, are in the process of being finalized as specific action plans.

Recognising the importance of infrastructure in our development process, the allocation for such projects has been substantially augmented by over 35 per cent—from Rs 45,252 crore to Rs. 61,146 crore. In the project sanctions of the All-India Financial Institutions, the share of infrastructure projects has gone up by 217 per cent in the current year. Infrastructure projects now account for one-third of the sanctions of Rs 75,000 crore.

We have also taken other steps to strengthen infrastructure financing. The Infrastructure Development Finance Company Ltd. (IDFC) has been set up with a capital base of Rs. 1,650 crore, with a unique public and private sector partnership to channel private capital into viable infrastructure projects.

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liberalized during this period.

New initiatives were taken to catalyze the interest of Non-Resident Indians in our developmental process. The success of the Resurgent India Bonds (RIB) is a demonstration of their willingness to participate in our nation-building mission.

The point briefly is: If you have a viable infrastructure project of national importance, I assure you that neither finance nor governmental clearances will be a constraint.

Regulatory bodies which can foster a competitive environment, coupled with autonomy and transparency, have been strengthened during this period in order to boost investor confidence. This process will continue.

I have listed these actions not to claim that what the Government has done so far is sufficient. I am as aware as all of you are that Indian industry and business are passing through difficult times. Confidence is low and expectations from the government high.

There are valid concerns about the capital market, imbalances in sectoral growth, sluggish pace of infrastructure development, and the slow spread of the spirit of reforms within various levels of the Central and state governments.

The present downtrend in the global economy is only a part of the reason for the difficulties faced by Indian business and industry. An equally crucial reason arises from internal factors—and they are not confined merely to the policies and performance of successive governments.

It is time for Indian industrialists and businessmen to look within and introspect deeeply. Has business and industry lived up to the expectations of the Indian people and the Government? Let me cite a few issues.

What is the main cause of the present depressed state of the stock market? Is it not, at least partially, created by a large number of public offerings by unscrupulous promoters who exploited the market in its boom phase, and later betrayed their commitment to their investors, mostly small investors?

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Can we allow such predatory promoters to go unpunished? I have instructed the concerned agencies in the Ministry of Finance to promptly look into this malaise and take suitable punitive action within the next three months.

I urge organizations like FICCI to cooperate with the Government in taking these firm but necessary measures to restore investor confidence. A reform process without proper checks and balances is neither good for you in business nor for us in government.

Take the matter of good corporate governance. How many Indian companies have adopted its imperatives and improved their own efficiency, transparency, customer focus, and competitiveness?

The time has come when this matter cannot be left to the promoters alone. The Government would like the Financial Institutions, on the strength of the significant stakes they hold in companies, to demand better performance and adherence to sound corporate practices.

I must also share any disappointment about a section of your fraternity which continues to base its investment decisions on short-term sentiments, and not on the long-term opportunities that our country offers.

Let me cite the example of the FDI proposals approved by the successive governments since 1991. The approvals amount to US\$ 52.67 billion. As against this, the total FDI inflow has been only US\$ 13.41 billion—that is, only 25 per cent of the approvals. I accept that policy issues and clearance problems are partly the reason for this dichotomy. However, it is also known that short-term vision has delayed investment plans of many project promoters.

I, therefore, urge FICCI and other business associations to make vigorous efforts to create an atmosphere that focuses domestic and foreign investors' attention on the Big Indian Opportunity. It is an opportunity waiting to be reaped once the cycle of recovery and high growth sets in., The Big Indian Opportunity can be realized only if business, industry, and the Government work with one mind and for one purpose—strengthen the economy at the earliest.

As far as the Government is concerned, I have already said that we assert our commitment to this goal not through words, but speedy action in the economic sphere in the coming months. I am, indeed, happy to announce some of them today.

Restoration of vibrancy to our capital market is an important component of Government's strategy to reinvigorate the economy. Towards this objective, we shall initiate the following measures that should improve sentiments significantly.

- We propose to permit companies to Buy Back shares within the prudential guidelines set by SEBI in order to enhance the value to investors. My Finance Minister, Shri Yashwant Sinha indicated this yesterday.
- The Government proposes to abolish the existing provision requiring its prior approval for inter-corporate investments by one Indian company in another Indian company.
- Companies will be permitted to enhance acquisition limits in accordance with the recommendations of the Justice Bhagwati Committee on take-over regulations.
- Structural improvements will be undertaken for accelerating Demat trading and settlements. This would bring great efficiency, transparency, and lower cost and thus serve the interest of small investors.
- Restructuring of PSUs and a credible disinvestment programme is critical for improving the productivity of our country. It is also a centrepiece of our fiscal management strategy. Past efforts in this direction have not yielded desired results. We propose to revise this process and set up a more transparent mechanism, so that the pace of restructuring and disinvestment is commensurate with the urgency of the problem. The action to achieve these objectives will be in place within thirty days.

- The Government has already initiated measures to open the insurance business to the Indian private sector. This is a major step in mobilizing long-term resources for funding long-gestation infrastucture projects. The Government is presently examining the proposal to permit an appropriate level of minority foreign equity in the insurance sector.
- Steps will be taken to speed up the passage of a new Companies Act and FEMA. Views of trade and industry will be invited before finalizing the Money Laundering Act.
- I know that developments relating to UTI's US-64 scheme have caused understandable concern among unit holders and the financial community. I wish to assure them that the Government will support the UTI fully in honouring its obligations.

The Government is alive to the need to further strengthen the financial sector with a view to making it more resilient to shocks. Although, we have succeeded in immunizing our economy against the South East Asian crisis, we cannot be complacent to the "contagion effect". This crisis began by serious weaknesses and over-extension by the banks and financial institutions.

Steps to improve the portfolio of financial institutions, deal with the problem of non-performing assets, and to improve the efficiency of financial institutions for making finance available at affordable costs is a high priority for my Government.

I am confident that these and other measures will improve market sentiments significantly, especially since the fundamentals of the Indian economy are strong.

There is a valid concern widely shared in political and business circles that Government spending in frastructure sectors has significantly come down after the start of economic reforms. My Government will remove this damaging imbalance.

The Government will start, within this year and from twenty different places across the country, work on a major 7,000-CC-0. Nanaji Deshmukh Library, BJP, Jammu. Digitized by eGangotri

kilometre road project. It envisages a six-lane North-South corridor connecting Kashmir to Kanyakumari and a similar East-West corridor connecting Silchar to Saurashtra. The project, which is expected to cost Rs 28,000 crore, will have the scope for maximum private sector and foreign participation. This project also has the potential to create as many as three crore man years of employment, which will be a major contribution to the realization of the national goal of "Berozgari Hatao".

Cement concrete pavement will be the preferred technology in this, as well as other ongoing projects for four-laning of our national highways. We expect the move to give a big boost to our cement industry, which is facing the problem of excess capacity, and, also, to the construction industry.

Telecommunications is a critical infrastructure for every area of the economy. There are a number of knotty problems in this sector, which are a difficult legacy that we are carrying from the past. However difficult, we have the political will to untie all the knots in the most transparent and consultative manner.

A new Telecom Policy will be formulated within the next three months to provide a state-of-the-art nationwide telecommuncation network, speed up rural telephone services, and to meet the new challenges of the convergence of telecom, IT, media, and consumer electronics.

In addition, within the next fifteen days, the following actions will be taken:

- All the outstanding issues between the Department of Telecommunications and the TRAI will be resolved to strengthen the latter's regulatory role.
  - Hereafter, we will ensure that two wings of the Executive do not go to court, for this amounts to an abdication of political responsibility.
  - The new Internet policy will be announced and licences issued to private Internet Service Providers.
- The Iridium project for global satellite telephone service

will be launched, as scheduled, on November 1. The necessary approval for grant of license for this project was given by the Department of Telecommunications yesterday.

I have mandated the National Task Force on Information Technology under the chairmanship of Shri Jaswant Singh to prepare a report suggesting a resolution of the outstanding issues in the telecommunications sector. including the license fee structure for basic and cellular telephone operators. The Task Force will submit its recommendations before November 30, and Government will take appropriate action before the end of the year.

In the oil exploration sector, the Government will offer

deep acreages with high potential for bidding and bids will be invited within the next two months.

The Government will identify five cities for the construction of world-class international airports with a maximum of 100 per cent foreign equity investment.

Housing is a priority for my Government. The National Agenda for Governance has set the ambitious target of construction of twenty lakh additional housing units each year. Besides giving a fillip to many industries, this will also generate large-scale employment. In order to accelerate activity in the housing sector, the Government has taken initial steps towards the repeal of the Urban Land Ceiling Act.

The Ministry of Environment will prepare a list of all industrial and developmental projects above Rs 25 crore, in which environmental clearance is pending for over six months. Consistent with our commitment to harmony between development and environmental protection, these will be duly examined and all deserving projects will be cleared by the Ministry within the next three to six months.

These are difficult times for trade and industry. These are also trying times for the Government. Yet, aware as I am of the ingenuity of Indian business to always emerge stronger from crises. I look forward to a more active partnership with you to CC-0. Nanaji Deshmukh Library, BJP, Jammu. Digitized by eGangotri

achieve faster and sustained economic growth.

When the going gets tough, India must get going with greater determination and self-confidence.

The challenges is yours in industry and business, for you have to refocus and restructure quickly. However, the challenge is also ours in Government, for we too have to redouble our efforts to speed up action—real, visible, creative action.

Together, let us confidently meet this challenge—and meet for the same occasion next year with more smiles on our faces and more contentment in our hearts.

With these words, I inaugurate the 71st session of FICCI and extend my best wishes to all.

### Value-Addition in the Agricultural Sector

IT GIVES ME great pleasure to be with all of you today at "Agro-Advantage Maharashtra", a unique Global Exposition and Global Investors' Convention.

I congratulate the Government of Maharashtra, Chief Minister Manohar Joshiji and Deputy Chief Minister Mundeji for organizing this conference which provides a common platform to highlight the investment opportunities in agroindustries, food processing, bio-technology and agricultural infrastructure development.

Speech at the Agro-Advantage Maharashtra Conference, Mumbai, 6 November 1998

The meet is highly significant in the context of the strategy to take your prosperous state to a still higher level of prosperity and all-round development. It also has a national significance. I see it as a trendsetter for other states which too have a big need and huge potential to attract domestic and foreign investment in agri-business.

Ours is a Government that represents, and cares for, every section of Indian society. Even so, I have no hesitation in saying that it represents, first and foremost, the farmers and the rural community of India.

Kisans sustain our society, because they feed our people. They also sustain our democracy, because they constitute the majority of the electorate. My Government is in office because of the kisans' trust and support. I assure them that we shall live upto their trust and do everything to promote their prosperity and well-being.

The surest way to promote the kisans' prosperity is by doing what you have set out to do through the Agro-Advantage Maharashtra Conference namely, maximizing value-addition in the agriculture sector and ensuring that farmers get their due share in enhanced value.

Value-addition in the farm sector is crucial for achieving Food Security for a nation of 100 crore population, which could reach 150 crore in the year 2025. The goal of a Hunger-Free India "Bhukh Se Mukt Bharat" is enshrined in the National Agenda for Governance. This cannot be achieved without doubling food production in the next ten years.

Value-addition in the farm sector is also crucial from the point of view of India's Economic Security. Our ambitious goal to achieve a sustained rate of 7 to 8 per cent growth of GDP rests primarily on a strategy to accelerate growth in the agriculture and agro-business.

This sector is the greatest source of employment generation and wealth creation in rural India. It is also going to significantly add to India's basket of exports and foreign exchange earnings.

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As we all know, Economic Security and Food Security have become an important dimension of National Security. In other words, the Indian Kisan must make full use of Vigyan, so that the task of the Jawan becomes easier. That is why, we have coined the slogan—Jai Jawan, Jai Kisan and Jai Vigyan. As far as agriculture and agro-industries are concerned, India has a natural advantage. Mother Nature is very kind to India. No other country in the world has so much cultivable land, so much water resources, such an old and rich tradition of farming, and so much of sunlight to do photosynthesis throughout the year—which is Nature's own unique method of value-addition. If we consider all the bio-energy produced in India and apply appropriate scientific and management principles for its use, ours will be one of the most prosperous countries in the world.

Prof. S.A. Dabholkar, one of the celebrated grassroots agriculture scientists from Maharashtra, has put forward a stimulating thesis that there can be "Plenty for All" if only we ensure that there is no waste land and no waste mind in the farm sector.

As a matter of fact, India's achievements in the newer and non-traditional areas of agriculture are considerable. India is the largest grower of fruits and the second largest grower of vegetables in the world. At 69 million tonnes, India is the largest producer of milk in the world. Our farmers are one of the quickest learners in the world—they have rapidly diversified into high-value crops, horticulture, floriculture, animal husbandry, fisheries, and sericulture.

One does not have to go far for a proof. Maharashtra itself provides it in plenty. Many districts of Maharashtra are well known all over the country as a major supplier of one fruit or another: Nagpur for oranges; Jalgaon for bananas, Pune and Sangli for grapes, Ratnagiri for Alphonso mangoes, Sholapur for pomogranates, Jalna for sweet lime and how can I not mention the onions of Nasik.

Thanks to the hard work and ingenuity of Maharashtra's farmers, lands which were drought-prone and barren only a

few decades ago, today produce seedless grapes and sweet pomegranates which carved a place in international markets.

Here I must also pay my compliments to the sugar industry in Maharashtra. It is almost entirely in the cooperative sector, and contributes to 35 per cent of the country's sugar production. It is an amazing achievement by many cooperatives in Maharashtra that, although, they started purely as sugar factories, sugar itself has now become one of their main products.

They have diversified into many areas of value-addition such paper, synthetic chemicals, alcohol, bio-fertilizer and, most recently, power through co-generation. I strongly urge the farmers in other states to emulate the example of cooperative entrepreneurship in Maharashtra.

Friends, our achievements, however, fall far short of our needs and also our potential. Thanks to a growing population, the demand for vegetables, fruits, milk and milk products, sugar and traditional farm products is constantly on the rise. The gap between supply and demand often creates crises. This gap is sometimes worsened by natural factors such as unseasonal rains, but more regularly by poor infrastructure and management. We have just now seen one such crisis in onions.

Is it not a colossal national loss that there are huge wastages in primary farm produce, particularly fruits and vegetables, which are estimated at Rs. 10,000 crore each year? Is it not a national loss that the processing of fruits and vegetables grown in India is less than two per cent of its production?

Bihar, for example, produces more lichis than all the states put together. But because proper packing, processing and marketing facilities are lacking, the poor lichi grower in Bihar gets no benefit for his hard work.

Similarly, our North-Eastern states account for 37 per cent of the country's ginger production. Ginger is an excellent source for a variety of ingredients that go into food, medicinal and industrial products. But since the facilities for present varion and

processing are absent, our people in the North-East are deprived of the benefit of value addition.

This state of affairs is largely due to the fact that the rate of growth of public investment in the creation of farm infrastructure, post harvest facilities such as cold chain, processing, quality control and marketing network in the past two decades has either remained stagnant or, in some cases, actually declined.

My Government is determined to arrest and reverse this damaging trend. In order to give a major boost to food-processing and agro-based business in the country, the Government has decided to launch a five-point programme, which consists of the following decisions and initiatives.

#### 1. Small Farmers Agro-business Consortium

The creation of a Small Farmers Agro-business Consortium was announced with much fanfare nearly six years ago. However the promise remained on paper, and no step was taken to implement it.

I am pleased to announce that the Government has taken steps to make SFAC function as a high-level coordination body at the Centre and in the States to promote public and private investments in agro-business. It will also encourage mutually beneficial collaboration between the cooperative sector and the corporate sector.

SFAC has started the work of rapidly creating a network of institutions in the States to attract investments in post-harvest facilities like cold storages and grain silos. It will help farmers to part-process agricultural commodities like vegetables, fruits, ginger, groundnuts, etc. for value addition. It will also provide a link between the private sector, farmers cooperatives, agricultural NGOs and the Government. North-Eastern States and remote and backward areas will be the special focus of SFAC.

### 2. Strengthening of Futures Markets in Agriculture

In order to create price stability for farm products which

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have a high potential for value-addition, the Government has taken steps to strengthen and expand the Futures Exchanges in many commodities. A proper futures exchange is important as it will help the farmer survive the vagaries of market forces, as other businesses do. It will provide him a place to hedge his produce and reduce his risk.

The Centre has recently strengthened the Forward Markets Commission, which will soon have many regional offices. Many more commodities will be taken for forward marketing. Cotton, followed by oil seeds and edible oils will come under its purview immediately.

#### 3. Promotion of Exports of Farm Produce

Globalization has thrown a major challenge before the Indian food processing industry. However, it has also thrown open new opportunities for exports. The old trade barriers are gradually disappearing. The quantitative restrictions on import of food products are being removed in a phased manner as per our commitment to the WTO. The Indian industry has to now compete in a global environment. This means that the food processing industry has to become globally competitive, cut costs, improve productivity, upgrade quality and adopt effective marketing strategies. There is considerable scope for increasing our exports of agro-products by taking advantage of India's geographical and climatic strengths. Our country can also be a very good production base for joint ventures for export to third countries. The Ministry of Commerce has drawn up a comprehensive plan for promotion of farm exports that will substantially increase our present low share of world trade.

### 4. A National Rural Cooperative Policy

We believe that organization of primary producers in local, state-level and national cooperatives is a reliable way of ensuring distributive justice. Cooperatives can also be effective channels to attract investments in agriculture and agro-business. The realization of both these objectives through cooperatives has been amply demonstrated by your own state.

It is, however, a fact that the cooperative sector is handicapped by many unnecessary constraints, because of which it is unable to fully benefit from reforms in the rest of the economy. In order to address this widely felt need, the Government will soon unveil the National Rural Cooperatives Policy.

One of the primary aims of the new policy will be to simplify the rules and regulations governing farm cooperatives. As a first step, we shall soon enact the long-pending Multi-State Cooperative Act.

### 5. Use of Information Technology to Agriculture and Agrobusiness

In line with the recommendations of the National Task Force on Information Technology, the Government has decided to promote Information Technology in agriculture and agrobusinesses in a big way.

It can be a major tool for boosting productivity and efficiency in production and marketing. Some states, for example, have taken up the task of networking all the mandis to provide better market information.

I am happy to note here the excellent progress in implementing the "Wired Villages" pilot project at Warnanagar in Maharashtra which demonstrates the benefits of IT for rural development. The project is a joint effort of the Central Government, Government of Maharashtra, the Centre for Development of Advanced Computing, Pune and the Warananagar Cooperative Complex.

I congratulate the State Government for creating a successful pilot project which can be emulated in cooperatives in many parts of the state and the country. On its part, the Centre will soon unveil a national scheme that will support such IT projects in the farm sector in a collaborative framework.

In view of the critical importance of this sector, the Government will constitute a high-level Task Force on Food and Agro-Industries Management Policy. Headed by Agriculture Minister, Shri Som Pal it will comprise representatives from the States, agriculture universities and R and D centres, prominent farmers and businessmen in the sector. The Task Force will submit an action plan for examination and adoption by the Government within the next three months.

With these words, I inaugurate the "Agro-Advantage Maharashtra" convention and express the hope that it will bring new investments into the farm sector in the State and in the rest of the country and bring prosperity for all.

# Role of NRIs in National Reconstruction

I EXTEND A very warm welcome to all of you—the delegates who have come from various parts of the world to attend this meeting of Global Indian Entrepreneurs. You have gathered here at a time of change and challenge, hope, and opportunities for your motherland.

For nearly two hundred years now, Indians have sailed to distant shores in search of employment and trade. Many, the forefathers of some of you, settled where they worked. The conditions in the early days of migration were neither easy nor happy, but they worked hard and diligently, some of them displayed their inherent entrepreneurship and established themselves in businesses. Early migrants went to Canada, America, and China and wherever there was British colonial presence. Over the years, the profile of migrants has changed.

We still provide skilled labour to the Gulf states and to

Speech at the Global Indian Entrepreneurs' Conference, New Delhi, 11 November 1998

other areas in the Middle East, but now a more important segment comprises of professionals, teachers, scientists, computer engineers and programmers, doctors, managers, bankers, and even gurus who are being acclaimed in areas of top management and creative thought. Similarly, in trade and industry, many businessmen of Indian origin have developed entrepreneurial skills, which their host countries are finding valuable to their economies. We recognize and applaud these luminaries on their success. I am particularly happy that some of those who have distinguished themselves in this regard are in our midst today.

In the last fifty years India has developed certain competitive advantages—include a large technical and scientific manpower base, fairly well developed infrastructure, a large network of banks, a well-established capital market, and a good educational system. India has always had a substantial private sector, active in all areas of the economy. A vibrant part of Indian initiative is manifested in the small-scale sector. This comprises thousands of small industrial units scattered around the country.

The Indian corporate sector is large and diversified, with a mix of ownership in public, private and cooperative sectors, and small, medium and large-sized enterprises, Our legal system is fair and just and we have the advantage of being a part of the English-speaking world. These factors make India a good destination.

We are all aware of the recent crises, which have affected the economies of South East Asia, and Russia. Even Japan is facing difficulties. At the same time, we may note the fact that our country remained by and large unaffected by these economic disturbances. This speaks well of the resilience our economy has developed over the years. Despite being part of the globalization process, our fundamentals remained strong and helped us to stay on course and prevented any major macro-economic imbalances.

The management of our economy, especially the economic

element, received your approval by your magnificent support to State Bank of India Resurgent India Bonds, which fetched 4.2 billion US Dollars in August this year. This is also a clear manifestation of your continuing commitment and support to the country. It demonstrates your appreciation of the economic outlook for the future. Significantly, these subscriptions to the Bond are in addition to the savings of more than 20 billion US Dollars, which the NRIs continue to maintain in a variety of instruments they hold in India.

More significantly, a sum of about twelve billion US Dollars has come in each of the last two fiscal years as direct remittance from Indians abroad. I need hardly emphasize how useful a role these resources have been playing in our economic development efforts.

In the last seven to eight months since my government took office, we have taken several initiatives aimed at revitalizing economic growth, promoting strong infrastructure development and bringing about an Information Technology revolution within the country. Several of these measures are already under implementation. In certain other cases, legislative bills will need to receive parliamentary approval next month. The direction, however, is clear. Economic reforms are here to stay and, if anything; the process is being accelerated.

We all appreciate the crucial importance of infrastructure in our development process. Towards this end we have taken a number of decisions:

- 1. Plan outlay for the power sector has been significantly stepped up this year.
- 2. The scope of automatic approval for foreign direct investment in power has been liberalized by placing foreign equity participation up to 100 per cent on the automatic approval route, provided the foreign equity in any such project does not exceed Rs. 1,500 crore.
- 3. The procedure for issue of counter-guarantee to eligible private power projects has been simplified, and counter guarantees have been simplified and counter guarantees have been simplified and counter guarantees have been simplified and counter guarantees have been simplified.

- Vishakhapatnam in Andhra Pradesh, Neyveli in Tamil Nadu, and Bhadravati in Maharashtra.
- 4. The Electricity Regulatory Commission Act, 1998 has been enacted to provide for the establishment of Central and State Electricity Regulatory Commissions, rationalization of electricity tariff and transparent policies regarding subsidies. The Central Commission has begun functioning. The process of setting up State level Commissions is on in various States.
- 5. The Electricity Laws (Amendment) Act, 1998 has been enacted to co-ordinate the operation of the grid system and allow greater flow of resources in the transmission sector.
- In the Petroleum and Natural Gas sector, Government has decided to sign Production Sharing Contracts with private parties for 18 exploration blocks covering an area of over 50,000 square kilometres.
- 7. Bids will be invited shortly under the New Exploration Licensing Policy, for which the way has been paved with the introduction of a liberalized royalty regime.
- 8. The Government will offer blocks to private and national oil companies for the exploration and exploitation of Coal Bed Methane, which is in abundance in India.
- 9. The process of Pricing Reforms in the Petroleum sector is being carried forward by initiating the dismantling of Administrated Pricing Mechanism in phases from April 1, 1998. This will provide the right environment for a faster and more efficient growth of the sector.
- 10. A good network of roads and highways is imperative for attaining and sustaining high growth rates. The Government will start within this year and from 20 different places across the country one of the biggest Civil Engineering programmes of our times. It envisages a six-lane East-West and North-South corridor covering 7,000 kilometres and estimated to cost twenty-eight thousand crore rupees. This

project will have scope for maximum private sector and foreign participation.

The six-lane corridor project has attracted a lot of comment, and some cynicism. Some have called it a dream, adding that dreams are not supposed to materialize into reality! I beg to differ. And yes, it is a dream: a 7,000 kilometre, six-lane corridor linking Silchar in the North East to Saurashtra in the West and Kashmir to Kanyakumari is a magnificent dream. A dream for India. If you don't dream, how will your dreams come true? Questions have been raised about the financing involving twenty-eight thousand crore of rupees. For a nation that saves more than three hundred thousand crore rupees per year, a country that imports nearly twenty-eight thousand crores worth gold, largely for savings, has ample resources for several projects of this scale and dimension.

The North-South-East-West corridor when completed will save fifteen thousand crore rupees a year just by way of petroleum products saved, and a like amount in wear and tear of vehicles and life and limb of drivers, not taking into account the time saved and efficiency achieved in transportation of goods. We have the will and the means and the technical knowhow to undertake this project and it will move in the direction I outlined in a speech to FICCI on October 24, 1998. I would like to remind you that the Bhakra Dam was viewed as an impossible dream in the early 50s; more recently, the tunnel under the English Channel linking Britain and France was considered both a technical and a financial impossibility. We will in the near future create financial instruments to channelize your savings and investments in this grand development project.

There are enormous employment and investment opportunities in India's information technology sector, which is the fastest growth segment of India's economy. My Government is committed to speeding up its growth. The first report of the National Task Force on Information Technology and Software Development containing 108 recommendations has been accepted. Many of the recommendations have now CC-0. Nanāji Deshmukh Library, BJP, Jammu. Digitized by eGangotri

been notified. They will remove the bottlenecks that had constrained this sector from growth even faster. The second report, devoted to strengthening India's hardware sector is with the Government—it will soon be considered. The recently announced policy for Internet Service Providers, probably the most liberal in the world, will add momentum to India's IT growth.

Telecommunications is a vital infrastructure for the development of the economy. We have taken a series of measures to open this sector for private investment and provide a level playing field. We shall announce a new Telecom Policy soon to achieve a quantum jump in this sector. The Global Mobile Personal Communications Service has already been permitted and the Iridium project has been launched on November 1, as scheduled. It is worth noting that out of four thousand crore of rupees foreign direct investment inflow in Telecom since 1991, almost fifty per cent has come during this year. This is an indication of the immense investment opportunities and the improving investment climate in this sector.

Government has often been criticized, and rightly so, for being long on policy pronouncements and short on implementation. We shall endeavour to correct this imbalance. Time-bound implementation of all decisions shall be demanded and obtained. Government shall enforce accountability for laxity and delay. Effective inter-ministerial co-ordination shall be ensured so that important policies are quickly translated into action. You shall not find us wanting in this regard.

The sustainability of economic reforms is crucially dependent on equitable distribution of the benefits of growth. We have no doubt that we have to cut through the volumes of complex regulations which we have accumulated over the last 50 years, reduce political and administrative interference and allow the innate entrepreneurial abilities of the Indian people to flower. The need for a leaner and more efficient bureaucracy, curtailment of government expenditure, a transparent and targeted subsidy regime, and commercially viable public sector

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cannot be overlooked. We recognize that increased competition brings in greater efficiency, lowers cost of production, and provides more and better goods and services to consumers. However, the Government also appreciates that a more market-oriented and less regulated regime does not imply an abdication by the State of its responsibility towards the poor and the disadvantaged. Our policies and programmes will adequately reflect both these crucial concerns.

Sustainablity of reforms in any country is also critically linked to the popular support-base of such reforms. The support-base would be fast eroded if reforms fail to deliver broad-based employment generating growth and make a perceptible dent on poverty. In this context, I am happy to say that reforms in India have indeed been successful not only in preserving this popular support base but in strengthening it further. In the largest democracy in the world, reforms have not only stayed on course but also actually accelerated even with changes in popularly elected governments. This is not only an adequate testimony to the popular base of reform in India, but also a guarantee of the continuity of reforms in the future.

NRIs as well as persons of Indian origin residing abroad frequently wonder, often aloud, as to why Indians who perform so well in so many fields abroad, falter at home. Of course, the questioning is about the environment here, at home. The brief answer is, yes, there are many problems. We cannot, overnight, create an enabling environment that matches what is prevailing in some of the developed countries. There are competing claims on our limited resources. We need also to be cautious about emulating models of development that are alien to our cultural milieu or not in line with our level of development. Yet, there is no denying there is need for change.

However, as we approach the dawn of a new millennium, our mission should be to bring about India's national renewal. We must build an India all of us can be proud of, where every individual exerts to the utmost and excels. We need to provide the ambience where excellence can thrive In going about this CC-0. Nanaji Deshmukh Library, BJP, Jammu. Digitized going about this

exercise, the views of NRIs could be of much importance. You have already shown a great spirit of adventure and perseverance in establishing a base for yourselves in the countries you are living in. Seeing India from outside, you may be in a position to give us a more objective assessment and advice. We shall, therefore, set up a suitable mechanism—a forum in the Government for effective on-going consultation with NRIs. The Indian Investment Centre will also be strengthened and restructured to enable it to address the investment concerns of the NRIs in a more effective and focussed manner.

Persons of Indian Origin who have settled abroad are as diverse as the people in India itself. While they may not need any economic support, there are educational, cultural and other needs, which are voiced from time to time. In pursuance of the announcement made by the Finance Minister in his Budget Speech on June 1, 1998, we have decided to implement a scheme for issuance of a Person of Indian Origin Card for those living abroad and having foreign passports. The PIO Card would be extended to persons of Indian origin settled in countries to be specified by Government. The Card would confer upon them a range of special benefits, which would include a visa-free regime and several other facilities in the economic, financial and educational fields.

Very broadly, a PIO Card holder will enjoy parity with NRIs in respect of all facilities presently available for acquisition and transfer of immovable properties in India, admission of children to educational institutions in India and under the various housing schemes of Central and State Government agencies. The details of the scheme have been worked out and will be announced very shortly.

There has been a long-standing demand of our NRI brethren to provide for Dual Nationality for people of Indian origin settled abroad. This idea needs to be considered in depth before a clear-cut policy can be formulated and translated into legislative and administrative action. Public opinion has also to be taken into account. The Government will, therefore, appoint a Committee to hold wide consultations, elicit public CC-0. Nanaji Deshmukh Library, BJP, Jammu. Digitized by eGangotri

opinion, examine the pros and cons of different options, and to formulate recommendations on the question of Dual Nationality or any suitable variant. This Committee shall give its report within three months.

I am given to understand that NRIs who receive dividend on non-repatriable investments are sometimes being required to furnish an undertaking that they will pay tax if required to along with a certificate from a Chartered Accountant. This is an aberration since we know that dividend in the hands of individual investors is now not taxable in India. If more information about this is given to the Finance Minister, we will redress the situation.

For years, there was strong criticism of the draconian Foreign Exchange Regulation Act. My Government, therefore, introduced a Bill in the Parliament to replace FERA by a more liberalized and progressive Foreign Exchange Management Act. I understand, however, that there are reservations about some clauses in the proposed FEMA, particularly those relating to the definition of "Resident". I assure you that we will initiate discussion on this issue and resolve the genuine apprehensions of the NRIs in this regard.

I am particularly happy to note that this conference is focussing on non-resident Indians as potential investors and entrepreneurs. NRIs are doing very well in their respective fields. By dint of their hard work and intelligence, they have made their mark in highly developed and competitive countries despite the handicap of being outsiders. They have substantial financial assets, but equally, or more importantly, brains—they are a brain and talent bank. We all know that in the developed countries, particularly in the UK, USA, and Europe, NRIs have achieved recognition and commendation because of their world class technical, financial and management skills. I strongly believe that NRIs can, if they set their mind to it, contribute greatly to changing the face of India.

I would like to congratulate FICCI and the Indian Investment Centre for bringing together representatives from CC-0. Nanaji Deshmukh Library, BJP, Jammu. Digitized by eGangotri

so many countries by organizing this important conference. I hope and trust that this meeting marks the beginning of what should really be an annual event in our calendar, when we get together with our extended family.

The Indian economy is growing and its fundamentals are sound. There is a spirit of entrepreneurship and competitiveness among Indians. I call upon all of you to come and contribute to this scenario of change, challenge, and opportunities which is taking place.

I hope your deliberations will be fruitful. I wish you all success in your endeavors.

## Common Approach Necessary to Tackle Price Rise

ON BEHALF OF the Government of India, I extend a very cordial welcome to the Chief Ministers and other representatives from the States and Union Territories who have made it convenient to attend this important meeting at short notice.

There has been a steep increase in the prices of certain essential commodities in the last few months. This has affected all sections of society, but particularly the poor and middle class families. At the outset, I would like to state that this conference expresses its empathy and concern for the people who have suffered hardships because of this problem.

The problem of price rise in India cannot be isolated from the problems in agriculture, agriculture markets, consumer markets and the administration. It is a problem that

Speech at the Chief Ministers' Conference to review the price situation, New Delhi, 27 November 1998

simultaneously affects both the housewife and the farmer. Whenever there is a steep price rise, it makes a hole in the expenditure budget of the consumer family and punctures the income expectations of the producer family.

Rising prices is a national problem. It needs to be tackled by both the Centre and the State Governments—separately as well as jointly. While an objective analysis of the problem is no doubt necessary for its proper comprehension and resolution, politicization of the issue should be avoided. The spirit of cooperation and sharing of responsibility alone can help us evolve effective long-term, medium-term and immediate strategies to stabilize and reduce prices of essential commodities. I am sure, we will conduct the proceedings of this conference in this constructive spirit.

My Government has accorded the highest priority to ensuring adequate supplies of essential commodities as well as keeping their prices within reasonable limits. Towards this end, a series of meetings has been held. Recently, the Cabinet Secretary had convened a meeting of the Chief Secretaries of States/Union Territories to review the price situation and also to evolve an Action Plan for curbing the rise in the prices of essential commodities as well as increasing the supplies of these commodities in different parts of the country. The Plan has already been sent to you for further action. I am sure that the State Government and Union Territory Administrations have come prepared to discuss the implementation of the Plan.

The main reason for the recent spurt in prices was the weather. Agricultural crops—particularly of onions, potatoes, edible oilseeds and pulses—have been hit by bad weather including heavy and unseasonal rains, severe cold, extreme heat in some areas and floods. This was worsened by some of the long-term infirmities in the production, supply and distribution chains.

On account of the low unit price of the agriculture products, even a small shortfall in supplies causes large price fluctuations. And the market structure responds to this reality in a manner detrimental to the consumers' interest.

I would not like to substantiate this point, since the Agenda Papers circulated to you, do precisely that, with the help of figures about the shortfalls in demand and supply of a few selected essential commodities. What needs to be noted, however, is that there have been large regional variations in the price rise. The onion prices in Delhi and some other cities registered much sharper increases than cities in the South.

I must dwell here briefly on onion prices. The unprecedented weather conditions leading to sharp supply shortages is the reason for shortage of onions. Arrivals of fresh supplies was also greatly delayed by the continued spell of unpredictable weather. It could have made a difference if the decision to place onion under the Open General License with zero import duty, coupled with arrangements for speedy imports, had been taken somewhat earlier.

The prices of other essential commodities like rice, wheat, sugar, tea and salt have shown a normal trend. In view of the comfortable stock position of the commodities, their prices are expected to rule easy in the coming months. As a precaution, however, the Government has decided to release 40 lakh tonnes of wheat to the State Governments for open sale at the rates fixed separately for different zones in the country.

Several State Governments have intervened in the market to ease the price situation. Market intervention operations, however, have their limitations, with which all of us are all too familiar. They must be resorted to, only if the need is urgent and acute. When well-managed, they do produce desired results and bring some relief to harried consumers. However, neither the Centre nor the State Governments can bear the financial and administrative cost to sustain them for too long and for a range of commodities.

We should, therefore, shift our focus to such mediumterm and long-term strategies as would better manage prices of essential commodities. There are four broad areas where the Centre and the States should together evolve a common approach. They are: production, supply, distribution and export-import management of agricultural produce.

It is obvious, but still bears emphasis, that we will not be able to gain a lasting control over the price situation unless we vastly increase production of all the essential commodities. This point is also important from the point of view of guaranteeing Food Security to our growing population.

Take, for example, pulses. This nutritionally important food item, the main source of proteins to the poor and the middle class Indian family, is today unaffordable to most Indians. The production of pulses has not made any significant headway during the last several years and has been fluctuating between 12 and 14 million tonnes a year. The per capita availability of pulses has declined from 69 grams per day in 1961 to 35 grams per day in 1998—which is a warning signal.

Similarly, the annual demand for vegetables and fruits, which was earlier growing by around three per cent a year, is now growing at a rate of over five per cent. The production of edible oilseeds during the year 1997-98 has declined to 222 lakh tonnes from 250 lakh tonnes in 1996-97. At the same time, the consumption of edible oils including vanaspati, which had been stagnating at around 3.8 kg per person until 1980-81, increased to 7 kg per person in 1995-96. Reflected in these figures are the growing numbers of new consumers.

These illustrative figures prove that, unless we greatly and quickly raise agricultural productivity, we will have recurring incidents of scarcities and price spurts in the coming

As important as production is how well we manage supply and distribution. A solution to the problem of large-scale wastage of agricultural produce brooks no delay. Expansion and modernization of the rural infrastructure— consisting of roads, transportation facilities, warehouses, mandis and the complete cold storage chain-must receive our attention on a priority basis. In this context, I think that the considerable sums that both the Centre and the State Governments earmark for CC-0. Nanaji Deshmukh Library, BJP, Jammu. Digitized by egalgonark for

rural and agriculture development under various schemes should be so integrated as to achieve tangible improvement in the rural infrastructure.

A major area of concern for all of us in the supply and distribution of essential commodities is the exploitative role of middlemen. This was evident even in the recent spurt in prices—the difference between wholesale and retail prices of onion, potatoes, pulses and edible oils was sometimes in the 200 per cent to 300 per cent band.

The worst irony is that increased purchase price for the consumer does not mean better sale price for the farmer. Prices of agriculture produce often fluctuate so wildly from year to year due to market manipulations by middlemen, that sustainable crop planning becomes a near impossibility. The recent agitation of groundnut growers in Karnataka is a case in point.

There is, therefore, an urgent need to protect the Indian farmer from the vagaries of the monsoon, and free both the farmer and the consumer from the clutches of unscrupulous middlemen. How to succeed in this struggle is a collective challenge to all the governments and political parties in India.

On the distribution front, improvement in the working of the PDS network, with active participation by the people, is an urgent necessity. In this context, I would urge those States that have achieved some success in this sphere to share their experience with others.

There is also great merit in the supply and distribution strategy suggested by some experts—namely, to forge collaboration between farmer cooperatives and marketing cooperatives in contiguous urban-rural areas, so as to obtain benefits for both the primary producer and the consumer. We should encourage institutions like the NDDB and State-level cooperative market federations to move in this direction.

Our policy on export and import of agriculture produce needs stability and continuity. There will, of course, be occasions. Wahar Deshmukh Library, BJP, Jammu. Digitized by eGangotri

to imports, as part of market intervention operations to bring immediate relief to consumers. However, in general, it should be obvious that India cannot depend on imports to meet our needs. Similarly, our export efforts to increase our share of the global market for agriculture produce should remain uninterrupted.

In conclusion, I wish to say that we need to draw some conclusions from the recent experience on the price front and take appropriate corrective action. I suggest that some of the steps, which we need to consider, should include:

- Early establishment of the National Crop Forecasting Centre. This has been under consideration by the Ministry of Agriculture for some time but action on this needs to be completed expeditiously. We should make full use of the satellite-based remote sensing capabilities of the Department of Space and the computer network set up by the National Informatics Centre covering all the districts.
- A review of the Essential Commodities Act with a view to examining how State Governments can be empowered for effective action against those who hoard and those who cause artificial shortages, and engage in trade malpractices in respect of not only foodgrains, but also items of mass consumption like vegetables, onions and potatoes. I am constituting a Group of Officials under the Cabinet Secretary to make suitable recommendations both on the amendment of the Act and on the steps needed to improve our enforcement mechanism.
- I propose to re-structure the Cabinet Committee on Prices and make it more functional for enabling timely and monthly reviews on prices to be made and ensuring timely corrective action. The Chief Ministers may consider setting up suitable committees in their respective States.
- A special cell would be set up under the Cabinet Secretariat to monitor and analyse price data and trends of essential commodities. It would also service the Cabinet Committee

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 We should undertake a nationwide programme to encourage establishment of efficient and cost-effective cold storages to minimise the high percentage of waste, coupled with a related programme to develop food processing industries.

I now invite your suggestions for evolving effective mechanisms to bring down the prices of essential commodities. With these words, I am happy to open the floor for discussions.

## Towards a New National Telecom Policy

I WELCOME ALL of you to the first meeting of the Parliamentary Consultative Committee of the Ministry of Communications.

We are in the midst of an information and communication revolution. This revolution is bringing about fundamental changes in every aspect of life at the national and international levels. It has also opened the prospect of India emerging as an Information Technology superpower. This prospect will become a reality only if we create a modern, nationwide telecommunications infrastructure at the earliest.

Telecommunications is also, by itself, an accelerator of economic growth. The telephone is no longer a luxury, but an indispensable tool in every conceivable economic activity. For example, the large network of STD/ISD booths established by the Department of Telecommunications in a short span—and

Speech at the Parliamentary Consultative Committee Meeting of the Ministry of Communication Sew Delhi, 27 November 1998 of Communication Sew Delhi, 27 Novem

we can see these booths even in small towns today—has immensely benefited small entrepreneurs and the common person. Experts have calculated that one per cent increase in telephone density results in a three per cent increase in GDP.

As you would make our from the agenda notes, this information and communication revolution has, unfortunately, largely bypassed rural India. The National Telecom Policy of 1994 had envisaged universal access and availability of basic telecom services on demand. We are way behind achievement of this objective. The failure is most glaring in meeting the target of at least one Village Public Telephone (VPT) for each of the six lakh villages in the country.

More than half of these six lakh villages still do not have even a single telephone line, not to mention other sophisticated forms of communications. Moreover, the telephone density in such of the villages, which do have a connection, is very low.

This should be a matter of concern for all of us. My Government will not allow the rural-urban divide to get further widened because of failures in policy and implementation to meet our goals in rural telephony. My vision is to see every Indian village connected with the Global Village that is being created by the information and communication revolution.

The failure in the area of rural telephony cannot be seen in isolation from the flaws in the National Telecom Policy of 1994 and its implementation. Today everybody recognizes that the reforms in the telecom sector, particularly relating to investment in basic and cellular services by private operators, have failed. This has not only adversely affected the general economy, but it has also considerably slowed the spread of telecom services in rural areas.

The country cannot, therefore, afford any further delay in resolving the many problems in the telecom sector, which my Government has inherited from the past. As I have stated on several occasions, we have both the political will and the competence to unravel these knots in the most transparent manner. In doing so, we will be guided solely by national CC-0. Nanaji Deshmukh Library, BJP, Jammu. Digitized by eGangotri

interests, to which all other sectoral interests must become subordinate.

As a first step, we have created a high-powered Group on Telecommunications under the chairmanship of Shri Jaswant Singh. It has been mandated to recommend to the Government

- To create a strong, independent, and credible regulatory 1) framework by strengthening the Telecom Regulatory Authority of India. The Government will move to suitably amend the TRAI Act, if found necessary by the Group to achieve this objective.
- 2) . To resolve all issues in the telecom sector, including the license fee structure for basic and cellular operators, to ensure fastest proliferation of telecom services in India, including in rural areas. As I have stated before, the Government will take suitable action in this matter before the end of the year.
- To formulate a new National Telecom Policy to address, 3) among other things, the revolutionary phenomenon of the convergence of telecom, IT, media and consumer electronics. This suggests that we may have to create a common policy and regulatory framework for telecom, broadcast, cable, Internet, and other aspects of convergence. All this will require the evolution and implementation of a rational Spectrum Policy based on best international experience.

In dealing with this important task, I have directed the Group not to tinker with the issues but to come up with a fundamental and lasting solution that will both meet the needs of the country and also take into account the rapid technological changes in this dynamic sector. Otherwise, within a few years, India might once again face problems similar to the ones we are dealing with today.

The solution must, among other things, address the national objective of rural telephony. We cannot expect the DoT alone to undertake this important social obligation. Private

operators will have to share this responsibility and meet their targets speedily. There is also a need to use many different technologies simultaneously—especially wireless—to ensure cost-effective and rapid spread of telephones in villages and hilly areas.

The solution must also result in further strengthening the Department of Telecommunications in order to successfully face the increasing competition in the coming years. There are many examples in the world where State-owned telecom organizations, after imaginative restructuring, have become major players both domestically and in global markets.

I am confident that the Honorable Members will make many useful suggestions on all these matters.

## Medium-term Economic Agenda of the Government

I AM PLEASED to be here at the inaugural session of the India Economic Summit organized by the World Economic Forum and the Confederation of Indian Industry.

Your conference is taking place at an extraordinary moment in India's democratic history. Whatever is happening now is a sign of the vibrancy of Indian democracy. However, I would like to assure you that volatility in Indian politics will have no fundamental impact on the process of economic reforms in the country.

The reform process has become irreversible. Indeed, my Government has depoliticized the economic agenda.

Your summits in the past have fostered constructive interaction between foreign and Indian business and with the Government. They have also facilitated foreign business becoming familiar with India's efforts, both, to carry out internal liberalization and to integrate itself with the global economy.

Since you met here a year ago, a number of new and decisive steps have been taken by my Government to strengthen our economic fundamentals and improve the productive efficiency of our system. In the schedule of your meetings over the next few days you would be interacting with some members of my Cabinet, some distinguished businessmen, economists and senior Government functionaries. They would outline for you not only what has been achieved during this period but share their vision of the economic agenda for the coming

Over the last nine months my Government has taken important initiatives over a wide gamut of economic issues which cover insurance, capital markets, information technology, housing and infrastructure, to mention a few. The reform process initiated is wider and deeper than any comparable programme earlier. Its multiplier effect would have long-term beneficial impact on the economic and social development of

We also take some pride and satisfaction that given the turmoil in the rest of Asia and many other parts of the world, our macro-economic fundamentals continue to be strong. They create new opportunities for private investment, both domestic and foreign. A GDP growth of well over 5 per cent, inflation below the double digit number, comfortable foreign exchange reserves, positive growth in agriculture, stable exchange rate management coupled with sectoral initiatives have reaffirmed the Government's commitment to a policy of liberalization with suitable checks and balances.

I have said so earlier and would reiterate today that there is no panacea or a role model to bring about high rates of economic growth coupled with social development. Each country has to devise a strategy that is BIPPEO prictandoriaddress

its own problems and serve its growth objectives.

Discussions are going on within the Bretton Woods institutions, the United Nations and other forums for a reform of the global economic architecture. We will participate constructively in this dialogue so that the emerging reform process can durably address the malaise that has adversely affected many countries.

Such a reform process should help in the evolution of a new financial architecture based on transparency, symmetry of obligations, equity, effective management in the face of rapid flow of large sums of capital around the world, and orderly development of world trade for the common good of mankind. Poverty alleviation must remain the central objective of international action.

We recognize that globalization is both a reality and an opportunity. We are convinced that nations cannot prosper in isolation and must forge complementary relationships based on mutuality of interests. India is committed to the continuation of its policy of liberalization coupled with effective social safety nets. We will also pursue policies to maximize the gains from the opportunities which globalization offers, while ensuring that credible mechanisms are in place to mitigate the risks that are inherent in this process.

Our aim is to be a strong nation, so as to be able to live in peace, prosperity and dignity. We recognize, however, that the strength of a nation flows primarily from the strength of its economy.

Whatever we do to strengthen our national economy, we will do it in a manner that will simultaneously strengthen the democratic polity of India; whatever we do to strengthen the democratic polity, we shall simultaneously strengthen the secular unity of India; and whatever we do to strengthen our democratic polity and secular unity, we will bear in mind the need at all times to dramatically reduce poverty in the shortest possible time.

In this endeavour our approach is the same as that

advocated by Prof. Amartya Sen, the great Indian economist who won this year's Nobel Prize for Economics—namely, liberalization and globalization yes, but with a credible programme to improve the social sector.

Many of our initiatives in the social sector are aimed at providing nutrition, hygiene, health, and education to those large numbers of our population who continue to be the victims

India is a democratic country. Democracy is our greatest strength. Freedom of thought, freedom of action, freedom to live with diverse faiths and customs are fundamental to our culture. I believe that these are essential components of liberalization and globalization.

We have another great strength. We have an unbroken record of honouring all our financial obligations to foreign investors and lenders. We have a sound legal system that incorporates many of the canons of Anglo-Saxon jurisprudence.

In a vast country like ours, with a population of a billion, with a middle class nearing the size of Europe, there are unlimited opportunities for foreign investment and management.

I hope your meeting will comprehensively take these strengths into account and discuss India's legitimate claims on international investments. It will not be out of place for your summit to discuss, in terms of figures and specific sectors and projects, what amounts of foreign investment should flow into India over the next fifteen years or so, and how such investments could be mutually beneficial. We believe that domestic savings need to be augmented and supplemented by external resources to achieve high rates of economic growth. Access to high technology dramatically improves the productivity and efficiency of investment. Foreign investment has an important contribution to make in this process.

My Government has created a new and growing opportunity for investments in infrastructure, especially in power, ports, airports, roads, telecom, informaticoatgahnology, CC-0. Nanaji Deshmukh Library, BJP, Jammu Digitizenti ecatgahnology,

in the service sector, and in insurance. The Foreign Investment Promotion Board has been functioning ever more actively and has approved a large number of FDI proposals. We would like to make India an attractive destination for foreign investment—both foreign direct investment and foreign institutional investment.

We recognize that given the global shortage of capital, nations must compete in creating a milieu that attracts foreign investment. India would be second to none in establishing a transparent framework in which such investment can flourish.

For us in India, right from the early nineties, when excessive Government controls on business and industry began to be eased, liberalization has meant a steady but sure approach, consistent with our concern to preserve social stability and democratic polity. I agree with you that the pace of change needs to be—and can be—faster. I assure you that my Government will act a lot faster, and firmer, on our economic agenda in the coming months.

Let me now outline my Government's medium-term economic agenda. In preparing India to face the challenges of full liberalization and globalization, my Government will create policies that will:

- Achieve an annual GDP growth rate of 7 to 8 per cent through a strategy that ensures low inflation and high employment generation.
- Strengthen the financial and banking sectors by introducing transparency, accountability, and non-interference by the Government.
- Rein in the fiscal deficit through a combination of measures like expenditure control and increased revenue buoyancy.
- 4) Productively restructure our public-sector enterprises.
- Give India before long a truly world class telecom policy with level playing field to both public and private sector players.

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- Address infrastructure constraints, and promote 6) Information Technology as a high priority.
- Ensure sustainable agricultural growth and create widespread 7) rural prosperity by encouraging massive private investments in agriculture and agro-processing industry. 8)
- Increase domestic savings to 30 per cent of GDP.
- 9) Encourage high long-term export growth and increase India's share of world trade. Also to strengthen our negotiating skills in settling trade disputes and representing our interests in trade forums.
- Massively generate employment through the small-scale industries, village, khadi industries and housing
- 11) Strengthen social sectors like health and education.
- 12) Create a milieu that can catalyze large flows of foreign and NRI investment in our priority areas on a sustained basis.
- 13) Create strategies to strengthen the popular support base for economic reforms, especially at the State level, by ensuring that the fruits of economic development reach the common man.

I am happy to state that, in implementing this agenda, my Government has adopted the philosophy of active partnership with the private sector. The Prime Minister's Council on Trade and Industry, as well as the six important Task Forces which I have appointed are mostly composed of economists, businessmen, industrialists and professionals without political affiliations. Similarly, the Prime Minister's Economic Advisory Council is made up mostly of economists unaffiliated to the Government.

Before concluding, let me, once again, reiterate what I said at the outset. Do not be overtly influenced by the democratic drama of the day. Look at the inherent strengths of India and the huge opportunities it offers for mutual benefit. These opportunities will grow irrespective of political vagaries.

I wish your conference a big success. CC-0. Nanaji Deshmukh Library, BJP, Jammu. Digitized by eGangotri

# Human Development and Public Governance

I HAVE GREAT pleasure in being here today at the inaugural session of the 78th Annual General Meeting of the Associated Chambers of Commerce and Industry. ASSOCHAM has a distinguished record of fostering interaction on issues concerning the economic development of the country. I am sure that today's meet will generate new thoughts and ideas, enabling us to look at new issues of contemporary and significant interest.

I commend ASSOCHAM for selecting a very appropriate theme for today's meeting namely: "Human Development and Public Governance". We recognize that India in the last five decades has made significant gains in building a sound economic and industrial foundation. Yet, judged by the universal indicators of Human Development, our record has been disappointing. We regrettably rank below most countries in this area.

It was with this in view that, in my first address to the Nation, I outlined five specific goals which my Government would seek to achieve with full involvement and participation of the State Governments. These were:

- Doubling food production and making India hunger-free in ten years.
- Expansion and improvement of social infrastucture drinking water, housing, education, healthcare, and sanitation—provision of drinking water to every settlement in the country within five years.
- 3. Rapid expansion and improvement of physical

Speech at the 78th Annual General Meeting of ASSOCHAM, New Delhi, 11 December 1998 Deshmukh Library, BJP, Jammu. Digitized by eGangotri

infrastructure—power, oil, petroleum and renewable sources of energy, roads, transport, airports, telecommunications and financial services.

- 4. Unveiling a National Water Policy so that no water goes waste and our water resources are cleaned up.
- 5. Making India a global Information Technology power and one of the largest generators and exporters of software in the world within ten years.

Special Action Plans to implement these goals have been prepared. These would be reflected in the Ninth Plan document, which we will finalize shortly.

Sound economic policies require a balanced and integrated development strategy. We have, therefore, accorded priority to agriculture and rural development, particularly in watershed development programmes, greater provision of rural infrastructure, and strengthening of cooperatives.

The agriculture sector has responded positively to the measures undertaken. It will, this year, grow by three per cent, thus reversing the declining trend of the recent years.

Infrastructure development is a cornerstone of our development objectives. We have substantially increased allocations in energy, transport and communications. Foreign investment norms have been significantly relaxed in various infrastructure industries. Automatic approval of foreign equity upto 100 per cent has been permitted in electricity generation, distribution and transmission. The Central Electricity Regulatory Commission has been constituted as an autonomous regulatory authority.

When the Insurance Bill is approved by Parliament, it will offer a significantly improved quality of service to customers, offer new insurance products and catalyze large investments—both domestic and foreign—in infrastructure projects of longgestation periods.

The National Task Force on Information Technology has prepared a blueprint for making India an IT Superpower. The

Government has begun implementation of this Action Plan.

I strongly believe that telecommunications, especially rural telephony, is closely linked to human development. Being the equivalent of the roads and railways of the future, modern telecommunication networks create enormous employment and downstream business opportunities. In order to enable India to reap the full benefits of the Telecom Revolution, I have constituted a high-powered group that will soon formulate a policy on Telecommunications, taking into account the convergence phenomenon.

The Group on Telecom also has the mandate to examine the outstanding problems in this sector and make suitable recommendations for their resolution. These problems, which my Government has inherited from the past, cannot be resolved within the faulty framework of the present license conditions. We shall, therefore, not hesitate to adopt fundamental and durable solutions to impart a major boost to the growth of the telecom sector.

Our vision of achieving a higher growth rate is not aimed at merely benefiting only the rich or the middle-class. On the contrary, the common man is at the very core of our developmental efforts. We do, however, recognize that we cannot improve the lot of the poor without achieving high rates of growth in the economy. Only an expanding economy can ensure growing employment and rising incomes.

Unless India grows at a rapid rate of seven to eight per cent, poverty and unemployment cannot be banished. Higher growth alone will ensure the mobilization of larger resources for the poor, for education, health, drinking water and roads, particularly for those living in the villages.

We must appreciate that the world is undergoing an economic transformation at a pace that is unprecedented. Nations today are more closely linked to each other than ever before, by ties of trade and commerce and information technology. No nation can remain isolated in today's fast-changing world. We must, therefore, restructure our economy at a rapid pace and

fine-tune our development policies in line with the changing requirements of the global economy to vastly improve our industry's competitiveness.

A big setback to human development in the past year has been the East Asian crisis. Although it is too early to draw final conclusions, some lessons on public governance are clear. The international response to such crises needs to be strengthened, both to prevent them and to do more to protect people from the consequences of an economic collapse.

Credible "Social Safety Nets" must accompany the process of global integration to protect the more vulnerable segments of our society.

Specific actions can be designed to protect the common man—public employment schemes, food provision for the vulnerable, credit allocations for small business and low-income households, and subsidies for community groups to provide meals for those thrown into poverty. International agencies and regional developmental banks have an important obligation in devising, encouraging and supporting such actions.

What are the challenges of Public Governance in the field of human development today in the Indian context? In my view, the first and the foremost issue is the imperative need to provide a responsive and clean Government. The efficacy of public governance critically depends on the broadening and deepening of democracy. It is, therefore, vitally important that we continue to strengthen our federal structure along with the Panchayati Raj Institutions which are the cutting edge of our democratic framework.

Moreover, we must resolutely work towards the eradication of corruption in public life. I am aware that the tone for this challenging task will have to be set by the political leadership at the different levels of government, by its commitment to high ethical values. It also calls for a durable consensus on the kind of relationship the political leadership should have with the civil service in pursuit of this common goal. The hallmark of this relationship should be a working environment in which

objective advice is actively fostered.

Education is a key agent for social transformation and for attaining the goal of modernization. Education must try to inculcate in the minds of the students the best values of a modern scientific temper while keeping alive everything that is basic in our culture and tradition. To be purposeful, education should perform the dual role of being a liberating as well as a harmonizing force. I will like to list some important issues in this regard:

- The universalization of primary education is a goal which has so long proved elusive. Among other things, this would mean raising resource availability in education so as to bring it to six per cent of the GDP. The efforts of the nongovernmental sector will be harnessed towards this end so as to obtain optimum results.
- Another equally important objective is the total eradication of illiteracy. Here side-by-side with a national strategy that would enlist all forces on its side particularly that of the youth, we are looking at regional and local factors that have impeded the growth of this movement and fashion interventions accordingly.
- Women constitute half of the Indian population but their status in our society is abysmally poor. Gender equity will, therefore, enjoy pride of place in our thrust on education. To redress the imbalance in society caused by the gender gap in education which is still at almost 25 per cent, we are fashioning instruments so as to make women's education free up to college level, which would be inclusive of professional education. Girls at the primary level will be provided free textbooks. We are also soon taking major steps to politically empower women, which is the key to improving public governance in the country.
- The Government will also keep in focus the educational needs of other disadvantaged groups in society such as the Scheduled Castes, the Scheduled Tribes and Other Backward Classes and the disabled.

• In recognition of the critical role of education in the nation's development, the current year's budget provides for a nearly fifty per cent increase in the total budgetary allocation of education from Rs. 4,716 crore in 1997-98 to Rs. 7,047 crore in this budget.

Provision of health services to the people is one of the most important facets of the work of Government. We are vitally concerned about equity in access to health facilities and securing a prominent place for health in the overall developmental framework. We have decided to review the Health Policy of 1983 to meet the new challenges that face us and the new frontiers that rapid technological changes have made possible.

The need for capacity building in the Central organizations and Institutions and upgrading and renovating the rural health infrastructure have also to be addressed in the new Health Policy. The emergence of AIDS and its frightening spread in the general population to AIDS will be suitably incorporated in the National AIDS Policy.

One of the most important developmental issues faced by us is that of population growth. All the good things the country has achieved, all the plans that are laid, the enormous power projects, dams, industries, urban infrastructure and housing will be diluted in their impact, if the growth of population remains unchecked.

Some States have performed well in this regard. Kerala and Tamil Nadu have achieved the goals set out for the year 2000 while States like Andhra Pradesh, Karnataka, Maharashtra and West Bengal are close to achieving them. However, large States like Bihar, Madhya Pradesh, Rajasthan and Uttar Pradesh have still a long way to go. These States together make up for forty per cent of the country's population. Many individual programmes have been taken up but we still have to make a deep dent on this problem. This is one of our biggest challenges.

In the National Agenda for Governance we have already mentioned that a judicious mix of incentives and disincentives for

population control shall be presented so that a national commitment on this critical issue is obtained. In line with this commitment, a new Demographic Policy will be finalized shortly.

The domain of public governance also includes the quality of management in the corporate sector. We have to remain vigilant to protect the interest of the shareholders and depositors whose money and capital is managed on trust by the corporate sector. Is the top management of a company doing all it can to maximize the shareholders' wealth? Are all major decisions taken by a company based on genuine commercial considerations and can they stand the test of transparency? These are vital questions, which cannot be ignored.

Our financial institutions are often large stakeholders in various companies. They must play their role as guardian of the shareholders' interest, in the management of such companies. This, of course, does not mean that they should interfere in any way in the day-to-day functioning of the companies. Issues concerning the quality of corporate governance will receive high priority by my Government.

I am certain that today's gathering will lead to several fruitful conclusions and consensus on these important issues. Our Government will be a facilitator in the development process. We will strive to create investor-friendly policies, remove procedural and infrastructural bottlenecks, and create a harmonious environment for high industrial growth. At the same time, we will focus on rapid development of the agricultural sector and upgradation and modernization of infrastructure. We will keep the common man, the poor, particularly those who live in villages at the centre of our development vision.

We will continue to strive for improving their quality of life through greater access to education and health facilities, employment opportunities and income. It is only through resolutely pursuing this approach that we can realize the dream of creating a prosperous and just society, an India that will occupy its rightful place in the comity of nations in the next century.

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# Reforming the Power Sector is Imperative

AM VERY pleased to be with you this morning. I welcome you all to this important conference.

Since assuming office nine months ago, my Government has taken important measures to implement reforms in the power sector. This is part of a broader thrust the Government has given to infrastructure development, which is the main driving force for rapid and multi-sectoral economic growth. We must reach a sustained GDP growth rate of at least seven per cent in order to dramatically reduce poverty and unemployment. Power generation must grow by ten per cent a year, if our economy has to grow by seven per cent and industry by eleven to twelve per cent.

Power empowers the people. It does so by facilitating creation of wealth and generation of gainful employment. Political power, irrespective of which party you or I belong to, has its justification only if we succeed in our twin national commitments to eradicate poverty and unemployment. Hence, if we take political power seriously, we must take the power sector seriously.

Unfortunately, we have to admit that we as a nation neglected the problems in the power sector for too long—and we are paying the price for it. There is acute power shortage in many parts of the country. This has reduced the growth potential in agriculture, industry and services. Very few among the many private sector power projects announced in the last few years have taken off. Most of our State Electricity Boards continue to be in poor health, making demands on the scarce

Inaugural speech at the Chief Ministers' Conference on Power, New Delhi, 18 December 1998

budgetary resources of State Governments. Our transmission losses are unacceptably high. What is worse, theft of power goes unchecked.

We cannot allow this situation to go on. The Centre and the State Governments have a common responsibility to ensure that we make a decisive departure from the past in the power sector. I take the Chief Ministers' conference on power today as proof of our collective determination to solve the problems in the power sector. At the end of our meeting today, we must come to some concrete decisions in this regard.

I must acknowledge that today's meeting is in contribution of similar Chief Ministers' conferences on power held in recent years. Two such conferences took place in 1996 and had created a Common Minimum National Action Plan for Power. We are now implementing some of its recommendations.

Within a month of our coming to power in March this year, we issued the Electricity Regulatory Commissions Ordinance. This, with some modifications, was replaced by a Bill that was passed by both Houses of Parliament, thanks to an all-party consensus. Soon after the enactment of the Act, the Central Electricity Regulatory Commission was established on July 25, 1998.

For us, establishing independent regulatory commission is very important. Efficient functioning of any sector is based on good regulation. Any structural reform has to be preceded by a regulatory framework and independent regulatory institutions. The regulatory framework should cover all regulatory areas in the electricity sector including generation, transmission and distribution.

We need more public and private investments in electricity. More than that we need to increase efficiency, lower electricity prices and improve customer services.

Improvements in efficiency will come from the unbundling of the sector and introduction of competition in generation, transmission and distribution and privatization wherever

possible. This is the only way to attract investments and reduce costs.

As you all know, India faces a large demand-supply gap. To generate an additional 40,000 Megawatts of power by 2002, alongwith the associated transmission and distribution network, we need investment of more than Rs. two lakh fifty thousand crore. My colleague the Hon'ble Minister for Power referred to this fact.

After we allowed private participation in generation in 1991, we hoped for a lot of private investment. This has not happened. The reasons for this are not difficult to find.

Weak State Electricity Boards are the biggest problem in India's power sector. They control 74 per cent of generation, sixty per cent of transmission and 97 per cent of distribution. Of the twenty State Electricity Boards in India, eighteen have negative rates of return. Their cumulative losses are Rs. 22,650 crores.

The financial ill-health of the State Electricity Boards is due to a lot of cross-subsidization, poor economic efficiency, poor maintenance of network and poor collection of revenue. The State Electricity Boards' tariff does not cover the cost of generation. Industry is over-burdened with tariffs, leading to increase in captive generation.

Each year, the State Electricity Boards lose more than Rs. 6,000 crore. How long can this continue? Should not the tariff structure be rationalized? Should not the State Governments ensure that their Electricity Boards do well? We need a national consensus on the pricing of power to the farm sector. It is my view that our farmers are willing to pay a reasonable tariff, provided they get assured, adequate and quality power.

Pilferage, estimated to be between seven and twenty five per cent, is the worst problem for State Electricity Boards. The distribution losses, though officially estimated to be twenty two per cent are, I am told, sometimes much higher. The sector is on the verge of a severe crisis due to the financial nonviability and is unable to attract any public or private investments.

Who is the culprit? Are the employees of the State Electricity Boards a part of the reform process? Have we ensured that their fears are allayed and their interests secured? Is there competition among different generating plants? Are the complaints of small consumers heard and redressed? Do consumers have any say in the running of State Electricity Boards? The answer, sadly, is no.

Another badly neglected area is energy conservation. Just four days ago, on December 14, we observed National Energy Conservation Day. It is true that there is greater awareness on this issue today than in the past. Experts say that India can save at least ten per cent energy each year by shifting over to energy-saving technologies and practices. This is equivalent to producing a significant amount of additional power relatively cheaply. I believe the time has come to launch a national energy saving campaign.

Unless we address these fundamental problems and bring in structural reforms, our efforts in the power sector will not succeed. Some of you have already done so. I congratulate Orissa and Haryana for bringing out their own reform Bills and setting up their own State Electricity Regulatory Commissions. I know that Andhra Pradesh has enacted its reforms Bill. Gujarat and Rajasthan have also got their Bills ready.

Nearly ten State Governments are in the process of setting up their own Regulatory Commissions. This is not enough. Five months have already elapsed after the enactment of the Central Bill. There is an enabling provision in the Central Act for the State Governments to set up Regulatory Commissions. You could easily set up the Commissions by issuing a notification.

However, only seven states have taken steps to appoint a Selection Committee, and the North-East States have requested

for financial support for setting up these Commissions.

I am keen to know the reasons why several States have not responded to the initiatives by the Government of India.

The transmission sector has been neglected for a long time. Since transmission was not a separate activity under the Electricity Laws, there was inadequate public and private investment in this area.

My Government has taken the initiative to enact the Electricity Laws (Amendment) Act, 1998 which has removed this lacuna and paved the way for facilitating more investment in the transmission sector. This would correct the imbalance in investment between generation and transmission.

Another important step taken by us is the formulation of a Hydel Policy. Because of low increase in hydel-power capacity over the years there has been a decline in the share of hydel generation, badly affecting the stability of the grid and its ability to meet peak demands.

The Government has approved a new Hydel Policy that lays down the mechanism to increase investment in hydel-power generation.

Recently, the Union Cabinet has approved the proposal of Ministry of Power for setting up of large power projects, both in public and private sectors.

Import of capital equipment would be free of customs duty for these projects. In order to ensure that domestic bidders are not harmed, price preference and deemed export benefits would be given to domestic bidders. Further, States would be advised to exempt supplies made to large power plants from sales tax and local levies.

So far schemes for thermal generating stations prepared by a generating company selected through the process of competitive bidding by the concerned Government above Rs. 1,000 crore required techno-economic clearance of the CEA. The Government has now raised this limit to Rs. 5,000 crore. This, I hope would go a long way in reducing procedural delays.

One area that calls for our immediate attention is distribution. There is a growing realization that we ought to have started our reforms not with power generation but with distribution.

After all, the ultimate test of all these reforms is to ensure that the common man gets adequate and reasonable priced power at his doorstep.

Today, private enterpreneurs have little confidence in the credit-worthiness of the State Electricity Boards and hence they are reluctant to make any kind of investment. The way out is to encourage private sector participation in power distribution.

Orissa and Haryana have already taken the lead in this. Various models of privatization of distribution have been recommended to the States. I understand that the Ministry of Power has also prepared a detailed outline of the procedures to be followed in privatizing distribution.

I would urge you to take immediate steps for improving the efficiency of distribution network in your respective States.

While the success of the above measures is dependent on active cooperation by the States, it also requires sound partnership between the Government and Industry.

With a view to eliciting the views of the Industry, I have constituted a Council of Trade and Industry. Six Groups were constituted under this Council, all of which have recently submitted their reports.

These reports cover not only power and other infrastucture sectors, but all areas that relate to our national economy.

An empowered committee has been set up to study these reports and facilitate implementation of worthwhile recommendations contained in them. I invite constructive

suggestions from the Chief Ministers on these reports, which are being widely disseminated for discussion.

The time has come now to set our house in order. We have been talking about reforms, debating its pros and cons, considering various models, and deliberating on policies for quite some time.

Let us translate words into deeds. I, therefore, urge you to chalk out a time bound programme for reforming and restructuring the power sector.

I have a suggestion on one specific decision that this conference can take. Let us collectively resolve to ensure that at least ten power projects, which are close to achieving financial closure, actually do so and start construction—before March 31.

I suggest that the Ministry of Power set up a Crisis Resolution Group to resolve the so-called "Last Mile" problems of these power projects.

This will send a reassuring signal to investors, and to the people at large, that we mean business.

If we do not seize the opportunity for reforms now, we will be doing a great injustice to this nation. Let us collectively usher in a new power reform initiative in the country.

#### Corporatization Necessary to Develop Country's Airports

AM PLEASED to be with all of you on New Year Day to open the new International Terminal of Bangalore Airport. The last time I was here, on Rajyothsava Day, I had seen some of the wonderful things in space science and information technology that this rapidly-growing city has to offer India and the world. Today I am honoured to do something that will make a big difference to Bangalore, and its future growth.

This new terminal building that I am inaugurating will help speed up Bangalore's international prominence. The information technology and other industries that have clustered around this city need an international airport to service them. For too long, the absence of such an airport was choking the movement of people and goods, and slowing Bangalore's growth.

Bangalore Airport is one of the busiest domestic airports in the country. To meet the long-felt need of domestic and international passengers for better service, the Airports Authority of India has built this integrated terminal. It will let seven hundred domestic passengers and three hundred international passengers to arrive on the ground floor and three hundred international passengers to depart from the first floor simultaneously.

Thus, the world-class people and businesses of Bangalore are finally beginning to get world-class infrastructure. Coupled with the projects to build a metro railway and an advanced sewerage system, Bangalore will soon be able to offer the best civic facilities for its residents.

This airport is, however, only a temporary measure.

Speech at the inauguration of New International Terminal Building at Bangalore Airport, Bangalore, 1 January 1999

Bangalore is growing so rapidly—indeed, some say that it is among Asia's fastest growing cities—that its air travel needs will quickly outgrow this building. Which is why, a bigger and even grander airport is needed to sustain the city's growth.

Unfortunately, this proposed new airport has been caught up in controversies, which my Government has inherited. I am confident that the Civil Aviation Minister, Shri Ananth Kumar, and his officials will soon resolve these controversies with the active cooperation of the State Government. This will enable work on the construction of a new airport to start soon to take on the expected increase in traffic.

Air travel is critical to India's future economic growth. Without proper airports that allow all-weather, safe, and hassle-free movement of people and goods, no city can afford to compete internationally. New airports need to be planned properly in line with future projections of traffic, because, once built, they are not easy to change.

Many countries in Asia have recently built large international airports, because they know that without them, their economies cannot grow. Singapore, Hong Kong, and Kuala Lumpur are some of the examples. Japan has, last year, created an entire man-made island to take its new airport. India, too, must have such world-class airports that provide world-class service to passengers.

That is why, the Task Force on Infrastructure headed by Shri Jaswant Singh is looking into all aspects of a forward-looking policy on airports. It has made many important recommendations in its interim report that will facilitate the creation of such airports. I am happy to announce that my Government has accepted them.

International experience shows that the large sums needed for building new airports, and upgrading existing ones, can only be raised by companies. Corporations also can run airports more efficiently, by making best use of the assets available to them. Accordingly, the Government has decided to corporatize Mumbai, Delhi and Bangalore airports, as a first step towards building world-class international airports in these cities. The inclusion of Bangalore in this list shows how important it is to my Government that Bangalore's airport becomes one of the best in the country.

In future, most airport infrastructure will be built and run by companies. A proper regulatory authority is needed to provide a transparent regulatory framework for this purpose. It is also needed to create investor confidence. Therefore, the Government will establish a regulatory framework for airports. This step will also facilitate speedy construction of the world-class airports using the latest construction and management techniques. Wherever necessary, the Government will allow hundred per cent foreign equity in these projects.

I am aware that many clearances are needed before any construction starts—both on new projects and for the upgradation of existing airports. Getting these clearances is taking a lot of time because many different agencies are involved. I want this to be done faster.

Building new airports, despite the fastest clearances, will take a few years. But we need better airports today. Hence, we would like to upgrade a few existing airports to international standards. This will be done with the help of private companies. The Task Force on Infrastructure has identified Mumbai, Delhi, Bangalore, Hyderabad, Ahmedabad, Goa, Amritsar and Guwahati for this phase of the development of India's airport infrastructure. More cities will follow later.

I conclude by complimenting the Airports Authority of India for having built this new terminal in a short time. I am sure it will help remove some of the bottlenecks to Bangalore's existing growth. I urge the passengers and other customers of this airport to use and maintain this airport well.

# National Highways: Lifeline of the Nation

TODAY IS A historic day for India. Yesterday, we began our journey of the last year of this century. Today we are all here to flag off a project that promises to take our country far along the road to development in the next century. This project is appropriately, a road project.

It is, indeed, the longest, the largest, and the most ambitious infrastructure project undertaken in independent India.

Today we begin work on the National Integrated Highway Project by laying the foundation for six-laning of the Hyderabad-Bangalore section of National Highway 7. When completed, and we must complete it in not more than two Plan periods, this project will be the most precious gift from our generation to the future generations of Indians.

The highway will link Assam to Gujarat, and Kashmir to Kanyakumari. The East-West and North-South corridors have been aligned with the Golden Quadrilateral Project, which links the four major metros—Delhi, Mumbai, Calcutta and Chennai. This programme would also include construction of expressways, wherever appropriate.

Hence, the six-lane highway will not only further integrate our great land through a network of world-class highways, but it will also place India on the fast lane to socio-economic development.

The Government has identified twenty sections of National Highways in various states on the East-West and North-South corridors, on which work would be started in this financial year. It is not a coincidence that the first point for laying the

Speech at the inaugural ceremony of the National Integrated Highway Project, Bangalore, 2 January 1999

foundation of this mega project is at a village called Devanahalli—in Kannada it means, God's Village.

We need the blessings of God for this major endeavour. We know, however, that divine blessings are reserved only for those who are determined, dedicated and are ready for hard work. We know, also, that mega projects need mega efforts. I assure you that my Government will work energetically for the sustained progress of this project. Simultaneously, we will ensure that the project brings maximum benefit to the villages and villagers located along its route.

Throughout history, the wheels of development of any nation have moved faster when that nation has built a better road network. Some of the trunk roads of today align with the ones constructed by the great Mauryan and Gupta kings. The Grand Trunk Road from Peshawar to Calcutta, built initially by King Shershah Suri, tells a fascinating story of the social, economic, and political history of north India.

In Assam, we have the inspiring example of the Cooch King Nara Narayan who built the 300-kilometer long Gohain Ali Road, which is a national highway today, in less than two years. In Karnataka itself, the roads and bridges built by the great Krishna Deva Raya testify to our own impressive indigenous engineering tradition in this country. In modern times, too, both before and after independence, our engineers have many proud achievements to their credit. I congratulate the entire staff of the National Highway Authority of India for aiming big and marching towards the big goals.

On this occasion, it gives me great pleasure to dedicate to the Nation the newly constructed four-lane National Highway section from Bangalore to Tamil Nadu border. This, too, will later become a part of the Mega Highway Project. It is of great national importance because it will service the Electronic City, which is going to be the hub of future development. Along this highway are located many of those software companies which have proudly placed India on the Global Information Superhighway.

It is also of particular importance to the people and the economy of Bangalore because a good part of industrial activity in the area is located in the nearby township of Hosur in Tamil Nadu. I am confident, therefore, that this highway will further strengthen the traditional ties of affinity and cooperation between Karnataka and Tamil Nadu.

I am told that the project of four-laning of the 25-kilometre stretch from Bangalore to Tamil Nadu border has been completed with international specifications. I commend the engineers, contractors, and consultants associated with this project for their excellent efforts.

I learn that the Asian Development Bank has provided loan assistance for this four-laning programme. We welcome the assistance extended by multilateral agencies for the construction of highways.

My Government has been giving priority attention to the development of infrastructure such as roads, ports, airports, power and telecom. Construction of roads is a source of large-scale employment—both skilled and semi-skilled. It is, therefore, important to us for the realization of our slogan *Berozgari Hatao*.

The total length of the National Highway network, when my Government assumed office in March last year, was 38,517 kilometres. Since then, we have already declared plans to construct new National Highways for a length of 11,068 kilometres, which is an addition of about 30 per cent to the existing length.

You will be glad to know that four new National Highways, aggregating to 868 kilometres, have been proposed to be added in Karnataka. Thus, the total length of National Highways in the State would be 3,229 kilometres.

The Task Force on Infrastructure, headed by the Deputy Chairman of Planning Commission, has been mandated to formulate an Integrated Transport Policy for the country.

The Task Force has done excellent work in a short time. It

has prepared a framework for ensuring expeditious implementation of the Mega Highway Project. It has also prepared a blueprint for innovative financing of this massive project, so that sufficient resources are available with the National Highway Authority of India for the construction of highways.

As I have stated earlier, the finances raised for the implementation of this programme, either through cess or other measures, will go to a dedicated fund. We will actively seek participation from the Indian private sector and foreign investors in this project. For facilitating this, the Task Force on Infrastructure has finalized a model concession document.

Land acquisition is an essential part of all road projects and other infrastructure projects. The time has come to think of innovative ways in which we could make farmers, whose land is needed for such projects, stake holders in them. This will ensure that our kisans benefit not only from the reasonable and timely compensation they would get for their land, but also from the subsequent commercialization of that land. As part of our commitment to expand and modernise the road network in India, the Government will also take necessary steps to improve rural roads.

Traditionally, road projects in independent India have suffered from enormous time overruns, which have, in turn, led to cost overruns. This must end. When we are aiming to build world-class highways, we must be prepared to complete projects as per world standards.

In conclusion, I would like to state that a great deal of work lies ahead of all of us. The success of this ambitious project depends on close partnership among the Central and State Governments, private investors, construction companies, supplier industries such as cement and steel, contractors and, above all, the local communities. Let us together resolve to build a highway to prosperity—a highway to India's integrated development.

#### Petroleum Sector— Opportunities for Investment and Growth

AM PLEASED to be with you this morning at the start of the Petrotech '99 Conference. This Conference, organized every two years by the Indian oil industry with the help of the Government, provides a showcase to the world of India's achievements and challenges and an idea of investment opportunities in hydrocarbons.

I extend a hearty welcome to all participants, especially our guests from abroad. India is a land of great opportunities. With continuing improvement in the quality of life for our people, the demand for energy is rapidly increasing. Oil and gas meets forty per cent of our commercial energy needs.

My Government is working to achieve a GDP growth of at least seven per cent a year. Hydrocarbon demand in India leads growth. We are looking at oil and gas demand increasing at a sustained rate of about eight per cent a year, compared to the world average growth in petroleum demand at 1.5 per cent. Meeting the requirement for petroleum products in the country poses great challenges before the nation.

In the fifty years since Independence less than half of our sedimentary basins have been properly explored. Our self-sufficiency is also falling. It was seventy per cent in the mid-1980s; it is below forty per cent now. Therefore, it is essential to mobilize technology and finance to accelerate exploration and production of oil and gas in India.

The New Exploration Licensing Policy has a favourable fiscal regime that is very competitive. To facilitate the working

of serious investors, we will further improve the structure of incentives.

There are countries in this region that are rich in oil and gas reserves; there are other countries including ours, which have a high demand for oil and gas. My Government is taking effective steps through diplomatic and commercial channels to develop hydrocarbon co-operation in India's economic neighbourhood to the mutual benefit of all the countries.

Definitive steps have also been taken to de-control and de-regulate the oil industry in India. Refining has been delicensed, and the world's largest refinery is being built in India.

A specific timetable has been announced to completely decontrol marketing by March 31, 2002. Simultaneously, tariff reforms have been initiated. The Government will review and accelerate these reforms to facilitate rapid development of the industry.



Prime Minister Shri Atal Bihari Vajpayee lighting the lamp to inaugurate "Petrotech '99", New Delhi, 9 January 1999 CC-0. Nanaji Deshmukh Library, BJP, Jammu. Digitized by eGangotri

To integrate with the international market, the Government is examining decanalization of imports with a suitable tariff regime.

The oil industry in India has, so far, been entirely in the public sector. We are restructuring all the PSUs to provide them the required operational flexibility and autonomy. This process will be accelerated.

In particular, inter-company alliances and synergies will be quickly developed to allow Indian PSUs and private companies to compete effectively within India and abroad.

A credible plan for the deep restructuring for the PSUs will be announced, including steps to sell the Government's equity, while safeguarding the strategic aspect of national oil security.

Inadequate infrastructure is causing constraints in trade and industry, including the oil sector. The Government is planning to construct national oil and gas pipeline grids to facilitate effective distribution with minimum cost.

Similarly, time-bound targets have been fixed for improving the quality of automobile fuels and automobile engines to protect the environment from polluting emissions.

Natural gas is going to become the dominant fuel of the 21st century. The country is making serious efforts to import Natural Gas through pipeline and as Liquefied Natural Gas (LNG). Indian companies are making good progress in contracting supplies and putting up terminal and distribution facilities. Foreign companies are also engaged in similar ventures.

The country has vast reserves of Coal Bed Methane (CBM) that also need substantial investment. The Government will facilitate these investments.

The tremendous challenges in this sector also offer tremendous opportunities for investment and growth. We want our country to become a major hydrocarbon power of the world in the near future. To realize this vision. I have decided to

constitute a Special Group of Ministers. It will work out the specific framework for creating a India Hydrocarbon Vision 2020.

Before submitting its report, the Group will interact closely with the private sector and professionals. It will also incorporate the best international experience. The Group will report to me in six weeks.

With the announcement of Indian hydrocarbon Vision 2020, I am sure the process of reforms in the petroleum sector will be accelerated in a time-bound frame. The current low prices of crude and petroleum products provide an opportunity for rapidly achieving price and tariff reforms in the country.

The Government plans to disinvest in oil PSUs that are highly profitable. This is consistent with my Government's desire to withdraw from the commercial sector and focus on the social sector.

With better prospects of major discoveries in the deep waters and with newer and cheaper technologies, India offers excellent opportunities for investment in exploration and production in the present scenario also.

I would therefore urge the oil companies and investors around the world to work out their plans to making India their priority destination for investment and growth.

#### Kerala—Marching Towards All-round Development

I AM VERY pleased to return to Kerala in the new year. When I had come here last time, I had inaugurated a multi-speciality hospital and an innovative programme for women's empowerment called Kudumbashree.

Both testify to Kerala's commitment to social development. Today, I am equally pleased to inaugurate this power project, which will help in the industrial and economic development of the State.

I want this land of Parasuram to write golden chapters of social, cultural, and material excellence. I want that the ports of Kerala again recapture the glory of yore when Kochi was known as "Venice of the East" and "Queen of the Arabian Sea".

I want to see Kerala win the Vallamkali—that is, boat race—of economic growth.

This NTPC power station is proof that Kerala is already surging ahead in the "boat race". It is Kerala's and India's pride.

I am happy to know that this unit was ready four months before time. The transmission system too has been commissioned seven months ahead of schedule.

My congratulations to the engineers and other staff of NTPC and Powergrid who built it in record time. Your achievement has a wider lesson for the scores of delayed infrastructure projects in the Government sector.

Time-bound project implementation should become the norm, rather than the exception, in PSUs.

Speech at the commissioning of the Kayamkulam Power Plant, Kerala, 17 January 1999

Kerala has achieved praiseworthy success in several areas. The people of your State have earned a name for themselves through their hard work and intelligence, both in other parts of India and abroad.

They earn valuable foreign exchange for the country. But now, there is a lot that Kerala needs to do to generate prosperity and jobs within the state. For this, it needs, among other things, an infrastructure that can sustain rapid economic growth.

In this context, this power project of NTPC becomes very important.

It will increase electric supply to the people and industries of this State who have been suffering from heavy shortages.

The Government of Kerala has requested the Ministry of Power and NTPC to expand this project from the present 350 megawatts to two thousand megawatts. If land and other facilities are made available, this should be possible. This project is close to Kochi port, which should allow supply of the required fuel, Liquefied Natural Gas.

I am sure that Power Minister Shri Kumaramangalam is looking into this. Considering Kerala's Peak power shortage of 26.4 per cent in 1997-98, this expansion will really be of great help.

India has neglected the problems in the power sector for too long—and the price we are paying for this neglect is very high. There is acute power shortage in many parts of the country. We cannot allow this to continue.

The Centre and the State Governments have a common responsibility to ensure that we make a visible departure from the past in the power sector.

Since assuming office ten months ago, my Government has taken important measures to initiate reforms in the power sector. We have involved the State governments in drawing up a 12-Point Action Plan.

I urge the State Governments to implement this plan in a CC-0. Nanaji Deshmukh Library, BJP, Jammu. Digitized by eGangotri

tangible time frame, as these reforms are critical to the future of India's power sector.

Weak State Electricity Boards are the biggest problem in India's power sector.

The financial ill health of the State Electricity Boards is due to excessive cross-subsidization, poor economic efficiency, poor maintenance of network, and poor collection of revenue. The State Electricity Boards tariff does not cover the cost of generation. Industry is over-burdened with tariffs, leading to increase in captive generation.

Each year, the State Electricity Boards lose more than Rs. 6,000 crores. How long can this continue? Should not the tariff structure be rationalized?

Should not the State Governments ensure that their Electricity Boards improve their performance? As I have stated earlier, it is my view that our farmers are willing to pay a reasonable tariff, provided they get assured, adequate, and quality power.

Let me give a very relevant example. The Kayamkulam power plant is built at a cost of more than Rs. 1,300 crores.

In future, the electricity generated from other power plants could cost even more. The India infrastructure Report estimates that India needs to install 111,500 megawatts of power in the next ten years at a cost of Rs. 624,400 crores.

How will this investment be paid for? The only way that Kerala and other States can afford this power, will be when all classes of consumers are paying their proper share.

In addition, there has to be adequate investment in transmission and distribution to remove the rising losses in this area.

Elsewhere in the world, T and D losses are around ten per cent; in India, it is twenty per cent. This must change.

States that have started carrying out these reforms are

beginning to benefit. Orissa, for instance, reduced its transmission and distribution losses by ten per cent points after the SEB was corporatized.

I am confident that other States too will implement these reforms, which will help solve the immediate and the long-term problems of the power sector in the country.

As a preclude to the formulation of a National Energy Policy, both the Centre and the State Governments need to consider our entire energy requirements in an integrated manner—today and in the foreseeable future.

In recent years, the Government has been laying much emphasis on harnessing non-conventional sources of energy—and for good reason.

Over-dependence on hydrocarbon fuels is not in the longterm interest of India for both energy security and environment protection. Hence, we must explore renewable sources of power generation as a matter of priority.

It is estimated that wind-based energy can generate twenty thousand megawatts; small hydro-power projects ten thousand megawatts; and bio-mass energy, seventeen thousand megawatts.

The Ministry of Non-Conventional Energy Sources has many programmes to promote power generation through me these sources. I would like the state Governments to participate actively in the implementation of these programmes.

Friends, the people of Kerala are known not only for their education, but also for the entrepreneurship of its non-residents. They have developed valuable expertise operating in a global environment.

They can use this expertise to invest in developing industries like electronics, as also those based on agriculture and minerals. Tourism, too, has a rich potential in your enchanting State.

I compliment your Government for the initiatives that it CC-0. Nanaji Deshmukh Library, BJP, Jammu. Digitized by eGangotri

has taken to promote Information Technology. In the years to come, I would like to see a revolution in entrepreneurship in Kerala.

May the Kayamkulam Power Plant power this revolution and fill the Kaaya—that is, body—of Kerala with greater strength and vigour.

#### Promotion of Exports— A National Priority

I AM DELIGHTED to be here with you today to present the National Export Awards and Certificates of Merit for 1996-97 and 1997-98.

Promotion of exports is a national priority. It is, therefore, only befitting that we seek to recognize excellence in this sector through these National Export Awards. I extend my felicitations to the richly-deserved awardees for their outstanding performance.

While acknowledging the performance of the award-winners through these awards, we also recognize the important role played by the entire exporting community.

Exports are not an ordinary economic activity. They are a vital element in our quest for national development. And their importance is growing phenomenally in today's era of globalization.

Exports meet several of our national needs simultaneously.

Speech while presenting the National Export Awards for 1996-97 and 1997-98, New Delhi, 21 January 1999

The valuable foreign exchange which they bring improves our trade balance. This in turn helps us to stabilize our currency at a time when volatility is the order of the day. I, therefore, urge the exporting community to aggressively pursue higher targets in order to strengthen our national economy.

Exports broaden and deepen our production and manufacturing base, thereby creating employment—especially skilled and knowledge-intensive jobs. The slogan, *Berozgaari Hatao*, reflects our national commitment to eradicate unemployment through faster growth of the economy. I would, therefore, like to see the export sector grow rapidly so that it could make a greater contribution to fulfilment of this national commitment.

In the process of broadening and deepening our production base, exports bring another benefit to our economy and to our consumers. They also improve the quality of products and services available for the domestic market. I would, therefore, urge the export sector to rapidly spread the culture of quality to other areas of the economy.

Above all, exports bring an intangible and non-economic benefit of enormous value to our developmental process. I refer here to the self-confidence and pride that Indian exports bring to the individual exporters, and to the nation as a whole.

I am sure all of you have experienced the thrill when, in the teeth of heavy competition, your product was selected for purchase in a foreign market. The same is the thrill when an ordinary Indian visiting a foreign land hears good words about Indian products or an Indian company.

A successful exporter is not just promoting the wares of his own company. He is also promoting India, and the Indian brand. This brand must be known worldwide as a place for quality products and services. Building such a brand takes years of hard work. I urge you, distinguished exporters, to continue with your good work, so that soon, any product labelled "Made in India" will become the first choice of buyers across the world.

It must be our aim to make India one of the top exporting nations in the world. This is entirely a realistic and achievable goal, given our size, our long history in global trade, our vast production base, and our rich endowments of natural and human resources.

Our exports have actually shown a negative growth this year. While exports to the USA and a few countries of the European Union have grown, a disquieting fact is that our exports to East European countries—areas exhibiting economic growth—have fallen dramatically. While the fall in exports to East Asia and Japan is understandable, we need to take a hard look at reasons for such uneven performance.

Friends, all of us known that competition in the international market place is becoming increasingly tough these days. The need for a close partnership among the Government, industry, trade, and society is greater today than ever before. I would even say that, it is this partnership—and this partnership alone—that can bridge the present wide gulf between what is achievable and what is actually achieved.

I readily agree that the Government carries the greatest responsibility for bridging this gap. We are discharging that responsibility in right earnest, as has been demonstrated by the first Exim Policy of my Government. The Policy has introduced several innovative features and simplified procedures to make matters easy for our exporters.

There is, of course, a great scope for further simplification and improvement. I would like every individual in the export chain—right from officers in Delhi to the employees at our ports—to remember that *delays mean death to our export dreams*. Especially, delays play havoc with the plans of small exporters and those from the non-corporate sector, who have the greatest potential to enlarge the basket of Indian exports.

Therefore, there should be absolutely no place for even a single procedure that is unnecessary and even a single restriction that is avoidable. We must unshackle our exporters to put up the best performance that they are capable of.

I would like to assure you that my colleagues Shri Ramakrishna Hedge and Shri Yashwant Sinha, working closely with the Surface Transport, Civil Aviation, Labour, and other related ministries, would create a coordination mechanism that will achieve this purpose.

In this context, I especially seek the cooperation of our trade unions. The time has come for all of us to seriously consider whether the present labour laws, and the machinery for their implementation, needs reforms to enable Indian exporters to tap the vast opportunities in the global market. It is my belief that the right kind of labour reforms will simultaneously protect the legitimate interests of workers, create more employment, and sharpen the competitive edge of Indian exports.

Export competitiveness, however, is only a function of the competitiveness of the entire economy. The poor state of our infrastructure is reducing our export competitiveness. The Government has given the highest priority to the development of our infrastructure. Our various initiatives in this regard will start bearing fruit very soon.

We have taken decisive actions to speed up clearances for power projects and to expand and upgrade our airports and ports. The Task Force on Infrastructure has formulated an ambitious National Highway Development Project, which I inaugurated in Bangalore earlier this month.

Speed of movement of goods within the country, and their shipment outside the country, is critical for the success of our export efforts. The Task Force will soon present to the Government an Integrated National Transport Policy, whose aim will be to create fast communication links for people and goods.

Cheaper and reliable telecommunication links with the rest of the world are crucial for increasing the competitiveness of Indian exports. A New Telecom Policy is now on the anvil. One of its major objectives is to rapidly increase tele-density all over the country. It will ensure that the prices of domestic CC-0. Nanaji Deshmukh Library, BJP, Jammu. Digitized by econgomestic

long-distance and international calls follow the global trend of sharp decline and become as cheap in India as in the rest of the developed world in the shortest possible time.

The New Telecom Policy will also be a big boon to India's software exporters. You are already aware of the many steps taken by the Government to make India a superpower in Information Technology. We have received an excellent response from the industry in this regard.

A recent happy development has been the signing of the Free Trade Agreement between India and Sri Lanka, which will bring closer economic integration in the South-Asian region. I am confident that this Agreement will lead to greater trade between our two countries which share so much in common. It will also lead to similar initiatives with our other neighbours in South Asia so that this region can become a closely-linked economic region with benefits flowing to all the countries.

Friends, the global economic slowdown in the last two years, coupled with the meltdown in financial markets in East Asia and elsewhere, have hurt our exports. In such testing times, it is all the more necessary that you take this adverse development as a challenge and explore ways of overcoming it in winning ways.

The negative effects of the East Asian financial crisis and the recessionary trends are generating new pressures for protectionism in the developed countries. The emergence of such projectionist tendencies and the denial of market access pose a new threat to the multilateral trading system.

This challenge needs to be properly addressed so that the legitimate rights of developing countries for fair market access are not denied. While we are fully committed to the fulfilment of all international obligations under the multilateral trading system, we would insist that our trading partners also, in turn, fulfill their obligations in letter and in spirit—especially in the matter of market access.

In conclusion, I would say that we must make exports a

national mission for the Indian economy, without undermining the needs of our domestic market. We can do so by replicating the spirit of success of today's award winners throughout the economy.

#### Tourism Fosters Peace and Development

I AM HAPPY to be with you this morning to participate in the India Tourism Day celebrations. I congratulate all those who have been named for receiving the award. I call upon others to emulate the examples set by the award-winners, redouble your efforts with a healthy competitive spirit, and work hard to achieve excellence in attracting more tourists—both domestic and foreign.

We all know that tourism generates many more jobs for relatively less investment. It is capable of creating large-scale employment opportunities, particularly in rural and backward areas where there are many attractive sites for tourists. It is, potentially, the biggest generator of foreign exchange. It is a non-polluting industry.

While foreign tourists generate goodwill for India around the world, domestic tourism is a powerful contributor to the cause of national integration. The Government has, therefore, accorded high priority for the development of this sector through appropriate policies and programmes. Tourism has often been misunderstood as an elitist activity without realizing its economic, social and civilizational significance. Travel from one place to another for the purposes of pilgrimage, pleasure, experience, education and business is not the exclusive privilege of any class of society but a universal phenomenon. Tourism brings together people of different cultures and regions and fosters better mutual understanding. For doing this effectively and durably, it demands conditions of peace. It is, therefore, rightly said that tourism is the greatest peace movement in the world.

Therefore, I commend all of you working to promote tourism in India for also promoting the larger goal of peace and harmony around the world.

Friends, on a day like this it is natural for us to celebrate what India has achieved in the field of tourism. But it is equally necessary to focus our attention on the gap between our achievement and our own targets, and also the gap between the progress of tourism in India and that in other countries of Asia and the world.

If there is any destination in the world which offers the widest choice to tourists, it is India. Nature tourism, culture tourism, exotic tourism, adventure tourism and spiritual tourism—we have everything in India to cater to the diverse preferences of domestic and international tourists. Yet, our target of five million foreign tourists has not been achieved, whereas even smaller countries are getting tens of millions of tourists.

Why is this happening? I readily acknowledge that, as in the case of other industries, inadequate infrastructure is a major constraint in the development of tourism. The infrastructure for tourism includes not only hotels, restaurants and other site facilities but also basic amenities and urban facilities. The Government has, therefore, established certain institutional mechanisms to achieve effective co-ordination and synergy between all the infrastructural Ministries like Civil Aviation, Railways, and Surface Transport. We are also working closely with State Governments.

Even as we continue with our efforts to create new airports, air routes, roads and other transport facilities, and develop new destinations and services on a continuing basis, it is important to improve what we already have. We need to ensure that our railway stations and bus stands are kept clean and function efficiently. We also need simpler ways of buying tickets and making reservations. These small but important changes, which need relatively less investment, go a long way in making travel and tourism in India more pleasurable.

Infrastructure, however, is not the only bottleneck in the development of tourism. I feel that one of the major reasons for the slow growth of tourism in our country is the unsatisfactory quality of service. Both foreign and Indian visitors who come to different parts of the country find that they do not always get helpful service. I have no doubt that tourism in India will flourish faster if our hotel owners, taxi operators, guides, local shopkeepers and all other service-providers work with the single-minded determination to improve the way they deal with the tourists. In this context, it is especially necessary to ensure high quality of service even for small-budget tourists.

Nothing makes a better and more lasting impression on a tourist than a courteous, friendly and helpful approach. A tourist who goes back with happy memories advertises the cause of tourism in India far better than anything else we can think of. Laws and regulations cannot ensure this. It is basically the responsibility of the people, including those working in Government agencies, to develop a tourist-friendly attitude.

Therefore, let us, on this occasion of India Tourism Day, resolve to remove every avoidable scope for complaint for every type of tourist.

Service can also be improved by using information technology. I would urge the tourism industry in India to make the fullest possible use of computers and the Internet. We should soon create conditions wherein a tourist, sitting in Vishakapatnam or Vienna, can plan his visit to the wonderful and magical states of Arunachal Pradesh or Sikkim. For this to happen, our entire travel and tourism industry will have to

change the way they do business.

Friends, international tourism today is highly competitive. There are several destinations in the world vying for receiving the same tourist from every country. In addition, the industry also has to face several challenges from time to time like economic recessions, law and order problems, inter-country conflicts, etc.

Our tourism sector must gear up to face this challenge effectively. This requires, among other things, a more concerted and coordinated effort involving the Central and State Governments, industry, tourism promotion organization at various levels and even our embassies and NRI associations abroad.

With such a partnership approach, I have no doubt that tourism in India will emerge as a major economic activity of the 21st century.

## Macro-Economic Reforms for Deficit Management

IN THE PAST one week, the Government has taken some steps to upwardly revise the administered prices of wheat, rice, sugar, urea, and cooking gas. These measures were necessitated by both the compulsions of the economy as well as the Government's conscious strategy to remove the many inherited distortions and inefficiencies in it, so as to ultimately benefit the poor and the disadvantaged in our society.

My Government fully recognizes that alleviating the living conditions of the poor is our primary responsibility. In the past

ten-and-a-half months, we have taken a number of initiatives towards this end. These initiatives aim at accelerating the rate of economic growth through removal of bottlenecks in infrastructure development and administrative reforms, employment generation on a massive scale and well-targeted schemes in the social sector to benefit the needy. We shall be taking many more initiatives in this direction in the coming months.

These efforts, however, will not produce the desired results unless the Government carries out certain macro-economic reforms, especially in the area of deficit management. Over the years, direct and indirect subsidies have grown so large that no government at the Centre has felt that the economy can bear their growing burden. Today, all the explicit and hidden subsidies total up to Rs. 1,40,000 crore or 14 per cent of India's GDP. This is unsustainable in any economy, especially one with a narrow tax base such as ours.

For example, during the past few years, urea production costs have risen sharply leading to massive increase in subsidy from around Rs. 5,000 crore in 1994-95 to about Rs. 7,500 crore in 1997-98. Even after present price adjustment urea subsidy will remain over Rs. 6,000 crore.

Similarly, there was zero sugar subsidy only a few years ago, whereas even after the present price adjustment the subsidy for sugar will continue at about Rs. 400 crore. On cooking gas, even after the recent price revision, the Government will continue to bear a subsidy burden of Rs. 2,000 crore—that is, more than Rs. 50 for each LPG gas cylinder for all consumers, including the rich. Administratively, it is not possible to have a two-tier price system for most commodities. As a result, the subsidy approach unduly benefits the rich, even though they can afford to pay the cost price.

Many of these subsidies have introduced grave distortions and inefficiencies in the production and delivery systems. Ultimately, these hurt the same poorer sections of society whom subsidies are meant to help.

Large-scale subsidies lead to high and unsustainable budget deficits, which in turn lead to high inflationary trends. Inflation is the single biggest enemy of the poor. It drills bigger holes in the meagre daily budgets of the poor than can be filled by across-the-board subsidies and their present inefficient delivery mechanisms. It is, therefore, well recognized that subsidies through administered prices, which are grossly out of line with the cost of production and procurement, is a poor way of serving the needs of the poor. Not only the Centre, but also many State governments belonging to different parties have realized the need for prudent subsidy control for steady economic growth.

I would like to emphasize that we are living in a very difficult global economic situation. We have to strengthen our self-reliant economy. We have to show to ourselves and to the world that India can put her fiscal house in order through deficit reduction.

My government's philosophy on subsidies is that they should be limited to those who are poor and needy, whereas others should pay for what they consume. It is for this reason that, following yesterday's meeting of the Coordination Committee of the BJP and its allies, the government has decided to rollback the price hike in PDS foodgrains for below-the-poverty-line consumers.

Revision of issue price is both normal and necessary whenever minimum support or procurement prices are increased to help our kisans. It is worth remembering that the Congress and United Front Governments, too, have done this. For example, PDS sugar price was increased twice by the previous government in the same year, 1997. It also increased urea price by ten per cent in 1997.

However, PDS issue prices for wheat and rice were not adjusted since 1994 even though procurement prices have been raised sharply—for example, by 66 per cent for wheat. Prolonged failure to adjust issue price was leading to a huge gap between issue price and economic cost, leading to ballooning increases in subsidy.

It was the previous government which decided on a new formula for PDS issue prices which would be ninety per cent of economic cost for above-the-poverty-line (APL) beneficiaries and fifty per cent for below-the-poverty-line (BPL) beneficiaries. Even after the current price adjustments, the issue prices remain below these ninety to fifty per cent norms.

Against this background, I urge all the political parties to look at the economics of subsidies in a broader national perspective with a view to evolving a consensus.

### Accelerate Economic Growth

I WELCOME YOU to the forty-eighth meeting of the National Development Council.

The most important agenda item for today is the consideration of Ninth Five-Year Plan from 1997-2002. The change in government delayed the finalization of the document, though the Plan is being implemented according to the outline set by the NDC in the Approach Paper. My Government firmly believes in maintaining the continuity of the developmental process, and it is in that spirit that we have continued with the progress of the Ninth Plan, although the final document is coming for approval now.

We are all legitimately proud of India's multifarious achievements in the first fifty years of Independence. This is

Opening address at the National Development Council Meeting, New Delhi, 19 February 1999

especially noteworthy since the nation's development has taken place within the framework of democracy. Yet, all of us share an equally deep concern over what we have failed to achieve so far. It is depressing that one-third of our citizens still live below a modestly-defined poverty line. Illiteracy is still unacceptably high; and many do not have access to drinking water, health services, housing, sanitation, and proper communication facilities.

The National Development Council is an important forum to continually review our developmental process and take appropriate macro-level decisions to progress in the desired direction. It is also the most effective institutional mechanism to conduct this exercise within the framework of harmonious



Prime Minister Shri Atal Bihari Vajpayee presiding over the 48th Meeting of the National Development Council, New Delhi, 19 February 1999

cooperation and partnership between the Centre and the State Governments.

Our collective commitment to the people of India is that we will eradicate poverty, provide full employment, build a strong economy, and create the right conditions for the full flowering of our national genius. For this, we have to speed up economic growth. The Ninth Plan must catalyze our efforts to achieve these goals in a substantial way.

We must make significant headway in building a sound social and physical infrastructure. We must double our food production in the next ten years to feed our ever-increasing population. We must simultaneously take effective steps to check population growth—an area that we have neglected so far. We need to use information technology in all areas of our national life to generate prosperity and lay the foundation for India's emergence as a knowledge-driven society in the 21st century.

I had asked the Planning Commission to prepare Special Action Plans on social and physical infrastructure and on information technology. These special Plans have been incorporated in the Ninth Five-Year Plan.

The Plan document before you details the programme of action that will set the tone of development in the next century. The target of seven per cent growth for the next three years is not an easy one to achieve, given the many difficulties and uncertainties of the world economy today. Yet, it is possible through determined effort of the Centre and the States.

We believe that the private sector, both in agriculture and industry, will provide the needed thrust to economic growth. However, Government will have to continue to play a crucial role in strengthening the social and physical infrastructure. This cannot happen unless the fiscal health of the Governments at the Centre and in the States improves considerably and gains strength.

The realization of the social and economic objectives of

the Ninth Plan depends critically on our being able to finance public investment in crucial areas of social and physical infrastructure. We will fail in our duty if we do not improve the Central and State finances. The Centre has started taking certain firm measures to fulfill our responsibility. I urge the State Governments, too, to put their finances in order.

Dear Chief Ministers, recent trends in this regard are alarming. States' own contribution to Plan financing has been almost non-existent. States are increasingly borrowing even to finance their current consumption.

Reluctance to mobilize additional resources to meet increasing expenditure is the reason for this. There is a need for austerity all around to contain wasteful public expenditure. Revenue should be increased through a greater attention to efficiency and productivity of the enormous human and financial resources we invest in our various schemes. Can we accomplish this without a political consensus to end competitive populism? No.

We are aware that the Centre has taken certain measures in recent years that have had serious, though indirect, repercussions on State finances. As an example, I mention the implementation of the Fifth Pay Commission's recommendations. Adoption of these at the Centre has had a snowballing effect on States. I can assure you that we will be more considerate of States' interests in such matters in future.

Charity begins at home. I would say the same about cutting the Central Government's expenditure. I urge all Central Ministries to enforce expenditure management rigorously. Why should we not have performance audit of our resources, rather than the usual expenditure audit? The resources, thus saved, could be diverted to meet more essential expenditure in the social sector.

Today there is both a need and scope to raise resources through levying reasonable electricity tariffs and irrigation charges. Untargeted and unintended subsidies often lead to distortions in resource allocation, besides failing to benefit the really poor. Reforms in the power sector, which we have been stressing at the Centre, must be quickly and effectively implemented by States.

We should also address the problem of implicit subsidies. For instance, take the subsidies for higher education. Is it not paradoxical that even rich students pay college fees that, in some States, are less than what they spend on cold drinks? No Government can afford to provide costly services, free of cost, universally. They must levy reasonable user charges wherever possible, particularly for non-merit goods and services.

What is required is a change in the mindset, in the fixed inherited notions about subsidized public services. We should not be prisoners of the past. Subsidized services should be restricted to only those who cannot afford to pay.

There is tax competition among States to attract private investments. Such policies are harmful as States have lost tax revenue without much influencing investment decisions. This must stop. Better infrastructure, faster decision-making, and investor-friendly environment are more important in the decision matrix of the investor community.

A practice that is pushing States towards fiscal crisis is the ready extension of guarantees to the borrowings of State-level public enterprises. These guarantees may devolve on State Governments, as the financial health of many such enterprises is not sound. This practice will hurt States' credibility and adversely influence their credit ratings.

Regional disparities are of concern, both across, and within States. Even some of the faster growing States have pockets that have lagged behind. We should exchange notes on lessons of such unbalanced development.

Faster and widespread development is the medicine for many of the ills of our economy, polity, and society. Let us strive to live up to the expectations of the people, especially of the poorest, who are also the majority of voters. Modern communications and media have raised people's expectations. We cannot forget that many of the social, political, and communal tensions we see today are due to the non-realization of these expectations.

The 73<sup>rd</sup> and 74<sup>th</sup> Amendments to our Constitution, five years ago, provide for a third tier of government. Still, several States have not yet imbibed the spirit of these Amendments. There is an urgent need for genuine devolution of political, administrative, and financial powers to the Panchayati Raj institutions. If democracy works at the national and State level, it will surely work at the village level also. Rather, democracy at the national and State levels will only be enriched by extending it to the grassroots.

All of us cherish peaceful and orderly progress. Good governance is essential for this. The rule of law is a pre-requisite for good governance. However, it is violated in many parts of the country. We, the Centre and the States, should together strive to restore the faith of the people in our ability to legislate sound laws and implement them.

People often perceive the bureaucracy as an agent of exploitation rather than a provider of services. Corruption has become a low-risk and high-reward activity. Frequent and arbitrary transfers, combined with limited tenures, are harming the work ethic and lowering the morale of honest officers. Before expecting discipline and diligence from the administration, the political executive should self-critically review its own performance. Unless we do this, we cannot regain credibility in the eyes of the people who have elected us to serve them.

A question that is often asked these days is: What is the role of the Planning Commission in a liberalized economy? While detailed micro-economic planning may no longer be needed, the Commission still has a crucial role in long-term direction-setting. In my opinion, the Planning Commission should emerge as a Think Tank for addressing the critical policy issues facing the economy, to formulate pro-people policies, and to improve the implementation of such policies through a better delivery system. I am directing the Planning Commission

to pay greater attention to identifying policies that rejuvenate the economy and help the poor.

Friends, as I mentioned in the beginning, we are standing at the crossroads. We need greater fiscal discipline and responsibility, both at the Centre and in States, so that public sector investment is not jeopardized. It will also help the private sector to perform its due role in the many difficult tasks it has to perform to achieve our target of seven per cent economic growth in the next three years. In addition, it will facilitate greater inflow of foreign direct investment, which we need in many critical areas. Scarcity of public resources means inadequate investment in roads, railways, power generation, etc., which are vital for a strong economy. The biggest loser will be the poor, the weakest, the underprivileged, in whose name many of the existing populist policies are often justified.

Let us all resolve today to rise above partisan politics and work together to build a strong, prosperous, and modern India. Let today's meeting of the NDC, the apex body of our Union of States, be long remembered for sending this message loud and clear. I am proud that the people have bestowed on us the opportunity at this critical stage to guide the destiny of India.

#### III Science and Technology

#### Indian Science Must Strive for Excellence

I AM HAPPY to be in the midst of this gathering of young Indian scientists and present the Shanti Swarup Bhatnagar Prizes. I always look forward to be among young people and to know what they are thinking and what they are dreaming. To my regret, such occasions are rare these days. Rarer still are the occasions when I can meet young scientists. What is lost in rarity is more than made up by the unique excitement today of knowing the works and achievements of some of the most talented young minds in Indian science.

Let me, therefore, express my heartiest congratulations to the awardees of the Bhatnagar Prizes. This is the most prestigious prize in Indian science and several eminent leaders of Indian science today were once Bhatnagar prize winners. I expect you to scale similar heights. In applauding you, I am reassured by the conviction that the future of Indian science rests on promising young shoulders.

I would also like to join my colleague, Dr. Murli Manohar Joshi, in congratulating the four eminent Indian scientists who have been elected Fellows of the Royal Society (FRS). This international recognition of your seniors should inspire and spur you to strive to reach still higher level of excellence. I would especially like to compliment Dr. Mashelkar, who is in our midst for this honour. He is not only one of India's foremost scientists, but he has also proved to be an able science administrator. Under his leadership, CSIR has regained its dynamism and prestige, besides showing itself to be capable of standing up to the challenges of liberalization and globalization.

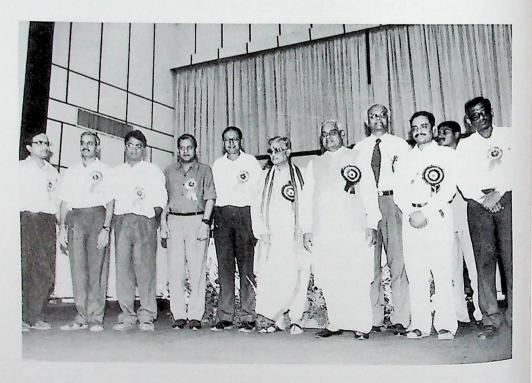
I must confess that both my work and my background are

Speech at the presentation ceremony of Shanti Swarup Bhatnagar Prizes of 1997, New Delhi, 25 May 1998

far removed from science. Yet, science and its achievements have always fascinated me. Besides fascination, science produces another impact on the lay mind. It creates national self-confidence. For example, our achievements in space science, computer science, agricultural sciences, chemical engineering, oceanography, and, of course, nuclear science fill our hearts with immense satisfaction.

Hence, I see a two-fold role for Indian science. On the one hand, it must continue to do what it is best at improving the lives of the people and contributing to the development of India as a strong and vibrant economic power. Simultaneously, Indian science must strive for excellence, which boosts our national self-confidence.

It is in order to draw the nation's attention to this twofold



Prime Minister Shri Atal Bihari Vajpayee with Shanti Swarup Bhatnagar Prize winners, New Delhi, 25 May 1998 CC-0. Nanaji Deshmukh Library, BJP, Jammu. Digitized by eGangotri

benefit from, and responsibility of, Indian science that last week at Pokhran I gave the slogan: "Jai Jawan, Jai Kisan, Jai Vigyan". I gave this slogan not just in recognition of the astounding scientific progress made by our nuclear scientists. Rather, Pokhran today symbolizes one of the greatest promises of science to transform India into a secure, self-reliant and prosperous nation.

The slogan makes no claim to originality. I have only added two words to the electrifying slogan coined by our late and highly respected former Prime Minister, Lal Bahadur Shastri, after the 1965 war. But I do believe that those two words, if understood well and acted upon well, have the potential to transform the face of India.

How shall we back this motto of "Jai Vigyan" with action? Permit me to present certain suggestions for the consideration of the scientific community, industry and policy makers in the Government.

One, we must make science and scientific temper an integral part of our national life and culture. Specifically, what is needed to universalize the scientific spirit, is to launch what I would call an innovation movement. The essence of science is innovation that is, newness in thinking and action. Can we, as a nation, resolve to do whatever we are doing in our individual or collective spheres in better, more efficient, more economical and more satisfying ways?

Two, as far as institutionalized pursuit of science is concerned, what is coming in the way of progress is not so much money but the bureaucratization of the institutions that we have created. We need to make science and the practitioners of science, central to all our planning and operations. Administrators and government officials should be facilitators, and not masters, of scientists. They should create conditions that encourage young scientists to do research and not push papers. Only in such an enabling environment can Indian science flourish. Any other way of managing science will only stifle it. This needs a radical change in the mindset of our science administrators.

Sustained motivation among scientists, especially young scientists, is absolutely cardinal to what we want to achieve. We should no doubt improve the working conditions and monetary rewards for our scientists. But, equally important, we should increase what I like to refer to as the "intellectual and psychic income" which all of you treasure the most.

Three, it is sad that our system allows only an inferior status to engineers. The best engineering talent migrates from India to greener pastures either abroad or within the country. I am told that a large number of bright young people who get a degree in engineering subsequently branch off into non-engineering jobs which have a higher prestige and a bigger pay packet. As a result, areas such as manufacturing, original design and development of technology and solving problems at the shop-floor have suffered. This needs to be reversed.

Four, we simply cannot neglect, as we have done so far, promotion of Research and Development in industry. I feel very worried when I see that investments in Research and Development by our industry, especially private industry, are miniscule compared to international standards. Naturally, there are hardly any products or brands coming out from Indian industry which can stand global competition today.

Our industries must create knowledge networks with our universities, IITs and national laboratories in a "team India" mode. For instance, right here we have the massive chain of 40 research laboratories of CSIR, in which the country has made heavy financial and human investments over the last 50 years. I urge the industry to forge powerful partnerships with these laboratories to gain entry into the global marketplace with winning technologies and then acquire a leadership position.

My vision is also to see many of these research laboratories as tomorrow's self-financing "knowledge corporations" with both financial and operational autonomy and capable of becoming world leaders in their own right.

Five, we need to accord greater recognition to highly talented scientists not only within the scientific community, but

also in the larger national community. Today, the entire nation feels proud of the Pokhran team led by Dr. Abdul Kalam, Dr. Chidambaram, Dr. Kakodkar and Dr. Santhanam.

The Indian tradition has always held *gyanis* that is, persons of knowledge in a higher esteem than the rulers. It is, therefore, not surprising that Dr. Abdul Kalam should be a Bharat Ratna, whereas I am only a Padma Vibhushan! I want this kind of recognition for the other achievements of Indian scientists as well, I want to bring Indian science and Indian scientists to the forefront of our nation's attention. In this, the media can play a vital supportive role by giving prime time and prime space focus on our scientific talent.

Six, there is a need to make scientific research in our country more and more application based. The questions that ought to seize the minds of both scientists and the people in government and industry are many.

For example, our agriculture scientists deserve a pat on the back for helping India attain food self-sufficiency. Their efforts in boosting wheat production have greatly succeeded. Now, how can we extend that success to other crops, especially in those areas where our kisans depend on dryland farming? How can we expand and improve our base of agro-based rural industries, which not only add value but also generate local employment? How can medical research bring down the cost of health care? How can we launch a massive nation-wide drive for energy saving and material saving? How can we produce more with less?

Some of the problems in this area are truly critical and brook no delay. Water conservation is one of them. Our scientists and our society must together find early answers to this problem.

Seven, we need to make the use of Information Technology a national campaign. My Government has set up a task force that will prepare the draft of a comprehensive National Informatics Policy. It will also recommend an appropriate institutional mechanism to implement it as a national mission.

This is an area where India can attain global dominance in a short time. Besides thousands of new applications are possible in this area which will generate high-quality jobs and improve the quality of life for the masses. I would, therefore, urge the scientific community to take up Information Technology-based research as a challenge. You should help create products and services that will serve as productivity-multiplier within India and also command high value in the world market.

Eight, Indian science must face globalization with courage and confidence and make it work to our national advantage. As I had remarked in my first television address to the nation, India has a right to be angry at seeing foreigners filing patents on *haldi, neem* and *basmati* rice. We will fight these patents and safeguard India's national interests. Indeed, CSIR has shown the way by winning the battle over the Haldi patent.

It is far more important, however, to know that we should develop more and more patents ourselves and also quickly move in the direction of their commercialization. There is a need to bridge the time gap between discovery and the marketplace. Let me emphasize that, increasingly, Intellectual Property Rights will become key strategic tools in the emerging era of knowledge-based competition. I am happy, therefore, to learn that CSIR has filed as many as 90 patents in USA and Europe in last year alone, protecting our exclusive technologies and our traditional knowledge. This is an example that other research institutions could do well to emulate.

Nine, in order to lift the prestige of Indian science, both nationally and internationally, I would strongly urge you to focus on some select areas of research, including basic research, where you can show global excellence. Let India become a leader, and not merely a follower, in science at least in some areas. Let us open up exciting new frontiers of knowledge ourselves, with the goal that some of these will be worthy of Nobel Prizes in the first decade of the next century.

Last but not the least, we must pay attention to our children. We must overhaul the system of science education in the country to base it on knowledge and creativity and not on memorising

and examinations. I am convinced that our young generation is far brighter than my generation. Please excuse me for saying so. They also have access to powerful learning tools such as computers, the internet and television. It is our responsibility to create an educational system which will allow the unlocking of the enormous storehouse of intellectual energy in our young generation.

Friends, these suggestions are neither exhaustive nor conclusive. I urge the entire Indian scientific community—that is, old and young scientists, science teachers and students, science administrators, science popularizers, the media, industry and policy-making bodies in the Central and State governments to deliberate on how to harness the full potential of science for nation-building.

After a few months of nationwide discussions, we should come up with an energizing charter of action. As far as my Government is concerned, I have no doubt about our fullest and most enthusiastic support to its implementation. I say this because the Minister of Science and Technology, Dr. Murli Manohar Joshi, is himself not only a scientist and a teacher, but also brings deep personal commitment to this cause which is so dear to his heart.

I once again congratulate the winners of the Shanti Swarup Bhatnagar Awards. Before I conclude I announce that, I accept the suggestion made by Dr. Murli Manohar Joshi, May 11 will be known as Technology Day every year.

## BARC—An Institution Par Excellence

I AM VERY pleased to be with you today. My sense of happiness is redoubled by the awareness that I am visiting a place that has made India strong and self-confident.

Bhabha Atomic Research Centre has always been the pride of India's R & D establishment. After Pokhran, however, BARC has become the pride of India.

If India showed her Shakti at Pokhran, it must be borne in mind that the "Operation" part of Operation Shakti was mostly handled at BARC. It is largely due to the dedicated and competent efforts of the nuclear scientists at BARC that India could successfully conduct the nuclear tests at Pokhran in May this year.

I would, therefore, like to salute all of you at the outset. Let me also express my appreciation of the able leadership provided to "Operation Shakti" by Dr. Chidambaram, Dr. Kakodkar and other gifted scientists at BARC.

They worked closely with Dr. Abdul Kalam, Dr. Santhanam and others in the DAE, DRDO and the Armed Forces. It was, indeed, a team effort of the most inspiring kind.

BARC has played a leading role in sustaining the progress of nuclear science and technology in the country for several decades. The research reactors designed, built, commissioned, and operated at BARC have helped the growth of nuclear technology in India.

These reactors have not only helped in advanced research in many fields, but they have also been used to produce lots of many different radio isotopes that are used in medicine, agriculture, and industry.

Thus, BARC has amply demonstrated the promise of nuclear science expressed in the phrase: "Atom for Peace and Development". After Pokhran, BARC has added a new and important dimension to this promise—namely, "Atom for National Security".

I have on several occasiors explained the philosophy and doctrine that guided our decision to exercise the nuclear option. I feel the necessity to do so once again from the platform of BARC.

India is committed to the goal of universal nuclear disarmament as the main guarantor of world peace. Our commitment goes back to India's Freedom Movement itself. The condemnation of the use of nuclear weapons in World War II, which was voiced by Mahatma Gandhi and other leaders of our Freedom Movement, is as valid today as then. "No more Hiroshimas!" is a mantra, which the Soul of India chants even today.

Even though we have exercised the nuclear option for well-known reasons of national security, our commitment to regional and global peace is total, absolute and undiluted. Indeed, our status as a nuclear weapons power, we believe, enables us to pursue the goal of speedy nuclear disarmament with greater vigour and success.

India will never be found wanting in any collective international endeavor to achieve this noble end. But the key word here is "collective endeavor". It is by now well recognized that a few nations sitting on huge stockpiles of nuclear weapons and insisting on collective restraint on the part of the rest of the world is an inherently unstable proposition.

As an ancient nation of close to one billion people, India cannot be a party to the perpetuation of an unfair and iniquitous world order. At the same time, India is ever ready to cooperate with any non-discriminatory treaty aimed at nuclear test ban, non-proliferation and, most importantly, actual disarmament.

In the years and decades to come, nuclear science, like any other branch of science, must exclusively serve the needs of human development—not destruction. There is a huge potential for international cooperation in the development of peaceful uses of nuclear science and technology. So far, only a meagre part of this potential has been tapped.

In this context, I must mention that free exchange of views, free travel and free association is at the very heart of global cooperation in the field of scientific research. It is, therefore, unfortunate that attempts are being made to put unwarranted restrictions on the participation of Indian scientists in international scientific conferences. Other negative measures are also being taken to hinder the normal activity of Indian scientists abroad.

Apart from being unjustifiable, these measures are also totally futile. They are not in the least going to discourage and dishearten India from the chosen path of pursuit of research and development in frontier areas of science. I am confident that you will achieve success and excellence in your respective areas of R & D—ideally in conditions of international cooperation, but in spite of it and without it, if necessary.

Dear scientists, you will agree that the main challenge before nuclear science lies in the energy sector. Energy is a basic human need and the economy of India and the welfare of our people are closely linked to its availability and affordability. Our per-capita electricity consumption, which is a reliable index of economic well-being, is among the lowest in the world.

We need to not only vastly increase the generation of power. We must also lower the cost of production of power. Today in India we need the cheapest power that we can get so that the poorest person is not deprived of the miracle of electricity.

The cost of generating one additional unit of nuclear power is very low. But the overall cost of nuclear power must fall. That is the challenge before all of you.

I know that you have the technical skills to meet this

challenge. Recently, you, along with your colleagues in the Nuclear Power Corporation of India replaced all the coolant channels of the reactor in Rawatbhata in Rajasthan at the same time, thereby reducing the cost of this work. This was an entirely indigenous effort. I urge you to come up with many other techniques that cut costs.

Having overcome most of the technological challenges, NPCIL is now ready to grow fast, but is restrained because of limited funds. I am aware of this problem and I promise you that the long-stalled nuclear power programme will be restarted.

There is no reason why only two nuclear plants have gone critical in the last seven years. Also, there is no reason why our trained engineers should not be exporting nuclear power technology to foreign countries.

Ladies and gentlemen, I am happy to be present in an institution that bears the name of one of India's greatest sons and patriots, Dr. Homi Jehangir Bhabha.

Dr. Bhabha was not only an outstanding scientist, he was also a visionary. Even before India attained independence, he, along with his mentor Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru, had the foresight to recognize that science and technology would have a vital role to play in the process of national development.

Think about it. In 1948, just three years after the nuclear bombs were dropped; India had constituted an Atomic Energy Commission for harnessing the peaceful potential of the atom!

It is gratifying to note Dr. Bhabha's work has been very capably continued by his successors in this Centre and in the many sister institutions that BARC has spawned. As we celebrate the 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the establishment of the Atomic Energy Commission, let us continue to be guided by the bright vision and the proud legacy left behind by pioneers like Dr. Homi Bhabha.

May BARC scale many more summits of success in the coming years, even as it stimulates excellence in the entire R&D establishment in India.

## Committed to Peaceful Harnessing of Nuclear Power

AM HAPPY to be here with you today. The completion of the Kalpakkam Reprocessing Plant is an important milestone in our nuclear power programme.

This is my second visit to a nuclear centre after taking over as Prime Minister. Last month, I was at the Bhabha Atomic Research Centre in Trombay on the occasion of the Golden Jubilee of the formation of the Atomic Energy Commission.

Kalpakkam is a comprehensive energy development centre of the Department of Atomic Energy. We have two Pressurized Heavy Water Reactors being operated very successfully by the Nuclear Power Corporation. The Indira Gandhi Centre for Atomic Research is working here on the development of Fast Breeder Reactor Technology.

The Kalpakkam Reprocessing Plant forms the link between spent fuel from the Madras Atomic Power Station and the fuel for the 500 MW Prototype Fast Breeder Reactor that also would be set up here. The Fast Breeder Test Reactor at the Indira Gandhi Centre has acquired good experience in this field. Kamini, the small but important reactor operating on Uranium-233, an artificial nuclear fuel derived from Thorium, is also located here.

I would, therefore, like to compliment the scientists and engineers of the BARC for successfully mastering the all-important nuclear fuel reprocessing technology and setting up this large reprocessing facility at Kalpakkam. You have done us proud.

Kalpakkam has further strengthened the confidence the

country has in your scientific, technical, and engineering skills. Your combined efforts have made India only the sixth country in the world to have this technology.

I would like to assure you that the Government strongly supports your endeavour. We would do everything within our means to help you realize the national mission to develop nuclear technology, which is so important for India's development.

Friends, sufficiency of energy is not only crucial for national development, but also for our national security. Here I am not referring only to our recent exercise of the nuclear option for national defence. We have made our stand on this matter very clear, and I am happy to note that the rest of the world is rapidly beginning to appreciate India's perspective.

I will have an occasion to further articulate India's views on this and other matters relating to global disarmament, development, and democracy at the upcoming session of the UN General Assembly in New York.

What I wish to emphasize today is the close relationship between energy and national security—even international security. Control over energy sources, their development and transportation is no longer only a business or technological matter. It has become a contentious issue in regional and global politics.

The politics of energy has become the subtext of much of international relations.

Sufficiency of energy is a security issue also because energy is a critical input in the nation's economic growth. A weak economy and strong national defence cannot go together.

If India has a become a strong and robust economy with an annual G.D.P. growth rate of 7 to 8 per cent, we must quickly meet the growing and largely unmet energy requirements of agriculture, industry, the services and household sectors.

If our kisans do not get adequate and timely power, how can they increase food production to make India hunger-free?

If our industries and services do not get adequate and affordable power, how can they become sustainable and globally competitive? If there are frequent power cuts in our villages and towns, how can our children study?

My Government is committed, therefore, to giving a very high priority to the energy sector. Without cheap and plentiful energy, there can be no development.

Where will we get abundant and cheap energy from?

India has large coal reserves. Oil and gas is also available internationally to fuel our power plants. As you know, the Government has recently initiated many reforms in the power sector. We have taken a number of measures to speed up the commissioning of power plants.

Considering the overall energy scenario in the coming years and decades, we must speedily increase nuclear power generation to supplement our energy production from other sources. Nuclear power can be a source of cheap energy, because a little bit of uranium can generate a vast amount of electricity.

However, to be economically viable, the total cost of nuclear power—the cost of building a power plant, the cost of maintaining it, the cost of reprocessing and storing the spent fuel, and the cost of dismantling the plant at the end of its useful life—must fall.

Only then, can nuclear power plants produce the cheap energy that our nation and our people so desperately need. It is often asked: why are we spending thousands of crores of rupees on nuclear power, when we can get much more electricity for the same money using other sources like gas?

This is a major challenge before India's nuclear scientists and engineers. I am confident that all of you assembled here have the skills and knowledge to meet this challenge and make nuclear power competitive.

The key to meeting this challenge is research. Top-class, goal-oriented research.

However, research—and that too in a frontier area like nuclear science—cannot only be a national endeavor. By its very nature, it demands close international cooperation.

It is unfortunate that the international nuclear regime today is highly distorted. On the one hand, the traditional nuclear weapons states want to keep the destructive power of nuclear technology in their own hands and resist nuclear disarmament. On the other hand, they restrict the enormous benefits of peaceful nuclear energy from reaching humanity at large that needs it most.

India deplores hurdles placed in the area of technology transfer. Our country stands for maximum possible international cooperation and collaboration in the field of R and D in hi-tech and high-benefit areas.

Before concluding, I once again applaud the achievements of our nuclear scientists and engineers. At the same time, I urge you all to think big, work better and aim at even more spectacular successes in the field of peaceful harnessing of nuclear power.

I now dedicate the Kalpakkam Reprocessing Plant to the people of India.

### Nuclear Power—A Source of Cheap Energy

I WELCOME YOU to the first Consultative Committee Meeting on atomic energy in this Parliament.

In August, I was in the Bhabha Atomic Research Centre,

Inaugural address at the Parliamentary Consultative Committee Meeting of the Science and Technology Ministry, New Delhi, 23 October 1998

Trombay for the function to mark the golden jubilee of the Atomic Energy Commission. In September, I was at Kalpakkam to inaugurate the Kalpakkam Atomic Reprocessing Plant. Today in October, I along with the honourable Members from the Lok Sabha and the Rajya Sabha, will look at atomic energy as part of the Parliamentary Consultative Committee meeting of the Science and Technology Ministry.

Without energy, there can be no development. If India has to become a strong and robust economy with an annual growth rate of 7 to 8 per cent, we must quickly meet the growing and largely unmet energy requirements of agriculture, industry, the services, and the household sectors.

India has large coal reserves, but even to reach energy usage levels somewhat comparable with the global average we need to make use of all our energy resources. One of these sources is nuclear power.

India has been developing nuclear power for many years. Now we can confidently say that we have the technology that masters the entire fuel cycle from the mining of the uranium to its processing to the design and building of nuclear power plants to the reprocessing of spent fuel.

In nuclear power generation, we are only the sixth country in the world that has mastered this technology. All kudos to our scientists and technicians.

Our nuclear and defence scientists also deserve our congratulations for their stupendous feats at Pokhran when they made India a nuclear weapons power.

We now have the skills to use atomic energy for defending the nation, for powering the nation, and for other civilian applications.

We have adopted a closed fuel cycle option for our nuclear power programme. This involves the recycle of plutonium. This option is important for India because we can rapidly increase the general capability once the Fast Breeder reactors that we are now designing come online. These will then use our vast

thorium reserves. Further, this option is better environmentally.

India is a developing nation and needs the cheapest energy that it can get. Nuclear energy can be a source of cheap energy, because a little bit of uranium can generate a vast amount of electricity.

However, in relation to nuclear power, it is often asked: Why are we spending thousands of crores of rupees on nuclear power, when, we can get much more electricity for the same money, using other sources like gas and hydel?

I answered this question during my visit to Kalpakkam; where I said, "To be economically viable, the total cost of nuclear power—the cost and of building a power plant and the time it takes, the cost of maintaining it, the cost of reprocessing and storing the spent fuel, and the cost of dismantling the plant at the end of its useful life—must fall."

I added, "I am confident that India's nuclear scientist and engineers have the skills and knowledge to meet this challenge and make nuclear power competitive."

There is another concern about nuclear power: Is it environmentally safe?

Here, I can confidently say that it is. India's nuclear programme is as safe as anywhere else in the world. We have never had any accident. Nor has the presence of a nuclear power plant caused any additional radiation-related diseases to its neighbourhood.

Therefore, I ask all of you to not be taken in by the illinformed criticism that swirls around our nuclear power programme, especially around the sites where we are building new reactors.

Apart from generating nuclear power through the Nuclear Power Corporation of India, the Department of Atomic Energy also does a lot of research in many high tech areas including accelerators, lasers, computers, biotechnology and materials technology. It has also encouraged technology transfers to other users and to industry.

These activities of the department help society. Radioisotopes produced by the research reactors are used in many areas such as healthcare, industry, agriculture, and research. The DAE is also working for the development of lasers having medical applications. All these technologies directly benefit the common person in the country.

The presentation to be made today by the Chairman, Atomic Energy Commission will be about these other peaceful applications of atomic energy.

After this presentation, I invite your comments and suggestions to strengthen India's atomic power programme.

### Incentives to Young Scientists

I AM VERY happy to present the Swarna Jayanti Fellowship Awards to the young and brilliant scientists who are doing research in frontier areas of science and technology. This fellowship and the monetary grant that it gives will allow you to focus on your research better and become internationally renowned scientists.

The world over, the best scientific research is done by scientists in the age group of thirty to forty. The Swarna Jayanti Fellowship is a scheme that we have devised to recognize and reward such Indian talent. This will help and motivate you to aim at more challenging achievements.

This scheme recognizes that rewards for scientists and intellectuals need to be not only monetary, but also psychic and

Speech while presenting the Swarna Jayanti Fellowships, New Delhi, 28 October 1998

moral. Recognition for good research within the scientific community, as well as in the society at large, is the most precious incentive that scientists look forward to.

It is only appropriate that these fellowships carry the name of the Swarna Jayanti of India's Independence. For, India's founders had always wanted the people to develop a scientific temper. They further dreamed that Indian scientists and engineers would be associated with the latest advances in science and technology for national development.

Which is why, independent India set up a large network of research laboratories and other scientific institutions. I am confident that your efforts will help in making their vision a reality.

While we have achieved much in scientific research and development, a lot more needs to be done. This has to be both to solve the basic needs of hundreds of millions of poor people and the emerging needs of Indian industry that has to compete with other companies for global markets.

Our scientists are capable of doing wonders. It is sad that most of them do so in foreign countries; not here.

To reverse this trend, my government believes that strong scientific research can only be done when the best minds are selected for research and when they are free to focus on their research and not filling out forms and kowtowing to bureaucrats. There is an urgent need to remove many cumbersome and delaying procedures from our research establishment.

I urge the Ministry of Science and Technology to take up the task of freeing our research and development institutions from bureaucratic control as a high priority.

I congratulate the Minister for Science and Technology and the Department of Science and Technology for taking such initiatives as the Swarna Jayanti Fellowship Programme. They have also come up with the Kishore Vigyan Protsahan Yojana, created a fund for S&T infrastructure in universities and other CC-0. Nanaji Deshmukh Library, BJP, Jammu. Digitized by eGangourn institutions of higher learning, and are bringing closer links between scientists, industry, and universities.

Dear young scientists, I have high hopes from you, I am sure that you will exceed these hopes.

My congratulations to all of you.

# India's Advancement in Space Research

I AM PLEASED to be in the midst of you at this premier Space Centre and to see the progress of India's ambitious space programme. I am truly impressed by what I saw here.

Space endeavour has not remained as a mere esoteric activity for us. We have taken great strides in developing and using this advanced technology to meet some of the real needs of our society. Space technology is being applied to strengthen our communications and broadcasting infrastructure, to make better forecasts of the weather, and to generate information to manage our natural resources in a sustainable manner.

Space is too important a frontier for India to neglect the cardinal principle of self-reliance. Since our needs for space applications are both diverse and large, we simply cannot afford to be dependent on other nations.

ISRO was founded to achieve this national objective. I salute the brilliant scientific personnel and technicians of ISRO for achieving this objective to a substantial measure. Today, we develop and operate our own satellite systems that are one of the best in the world.

Through our Communication satellite programmes, we have established one of the largest domestic satellite constellations in the world. Our remote sensing satellite programme ranks among the best in the world. Many countries receive and use data from the Indian remote sensing satellites.

We can now launch our own remote sensing satellites using the Polar Satellite Launch Vehicle. I am aware of the satisfactory progress to make our own cryogenic engines. I look forward to the initial tests of them early next year.

Soon, we will be able to launch geo-stationary satellites with the GSLV rocket that is expected to make its maiden test flight during next year.

Space is both an exciting subject and a useful resource for learning. The Government has accepted the recommendation of the National Task Force on Information Technology, that all the institutions of higher learning would get network connectivity by 2000.

As an important move in this direction, in my address to the nation on Independence Day this year, I announced the Swarna Jayanti Vidya Vikas Antariksh Upagrah Yojana. This envisaged the creation, within a year, of a dedicated spacebased educational communication system using six transponders of INSAT-3B. I am pleased to see that Dr. Kasturirangan and his colleagues have taken this mission as a challenge.

I note with satisfaction that there is rapid progress towards creation of additional capacity in the INSAT system. The INSAT-2E satellite, which is the most advanced satellite till now in the INSAT series, is in the final stages of testing and will be ready for launch in a few months. The follow-on satellite, INSAT-3B, which is being built will also be ready for launch next year.

Both these satellites will expand our telecommunications and television broadcasting capacity. In addition, INSAT-2E will incorporate a more sophisticated meterological observing CC-0. Nanaji Deshmukh Library, BJP, Jammu. Digitized by eGangoth

instrument than what was available on earlier satellites.

I am also pleased to see the progress on the future remote sensing satellites. Our first Ocean Satellite, IRS-P4, will be ready for launch with our own PSLV rocket early next year.

For these impressive achievements, I congratulate all the people from the Department of Space. At the same time, I urge them to collaborate more vigorously with our national scientific laboratories, academia, and industries, who can contribute positively to your space endeavour.

Space-based communications is needed to meet the increasing needs of information technology, distance education and developmental and business communication. These and a variety of other services require a world class space communications infrastructure, unhindered by the restrictions of the pre-reforms era.

The Government is working out relevant modalities in this context that would include the use of INSAT capacity by private service providers and privately-owned Indian registered satellites.

My Government fully supports the goals set for the space programme during the current Plan. Accordingly, we have allocated adequate money for the Department of Space this year, that is a record sixty per cent higher than last year.

In our quest to achieve rapid progress in various fields, there is an urgent need to remove regional imbalances in development. The impact and applications of space technology have to spread further along the length and breadth of our country. As one of the initiatives in this direction, a Space Centre will be established in the North-Eastern region of India under collaboration between Department of Space and the North-Eastern Council. This will contribute further to the human resources development as well as the promotion of space applications in various sectors vital for the development of this strategic region.

Our space programme has been actively promoting CC-0. Nanaji Deshmukh Library, BJP, Jammu. Digitized by eGangotri

international cooperation. A major conference of ministers from UN-ESCAP countries will be hosted by India next year to promote space technology applications for sustainable global development.

In addition, recently a UN-affiliated Regional Centre for Space Science and Technology Education was established. It has been providing vital educational inputs to several countries in the Asia Pacific region.

Dear scientists, space is all about vision. Throughout history, stars and planets and the infinitely huge space that provides them home, have inspired human beings and energized them to reach out, exceed themselves, and achieve higher goals be it in politics, business, scientific research, poetry and literature, and even romance. Our national space programme should have a big vision, whose dream like power drives all its activities. There will be failures and setbacks—after all, which country has not had setbacks in its space programme? We should not be deterred or disheartened by them.

Space symbolizes the spirit of adventure and exploration for the humanity. It is unique among all other human endeavours. There is something special about space that fires our imagination. Just three days back, 77 year old John Glenn went back to space. I salute such courage and I dream of the day, very soon, when we can put an Indian into space in an Indian spaceship.

For me too, space is special. I remember how I listened to the radio commentary of Neil Armstrong's first steps on the moon. I remember with pride the launch of Aryabhatta and other subsequent Indian satellites and rockets. This was entirely due to the vision of Vikram Sarabhai, M.G.K. Menon, Satish Dhawan, U.R. Rao, and others pioneers of India's space programme. On my first visit to ISRO as Prime Minister I pay my tribute to them.

I wish the Department of Space, and all the personnel of ISRO, the very best in your march to achieve this mission.

# Information Technology is India's Tomorrow

As I FLEW into Bangalore yesterday, I was surprised to see festivities everywhere. I knew, of course, that November 1 is Karnataka Rajyotsava Day and celebrations are in order. Evidently, Bangalore had decked up for another festival—to celebrate an achievement which has earned this beautiful city a proud place on the Global Information Technology, IT, map.

I am happy to inaugurate this unique festival—Bangalore IT.com. On this occasion, I extend my hearty rajyotsava felicitations to the people of Bangalore and Karnataka, and also express my deep appreciation for what your city has achieved in the field of information technology.

After Bangalore showed what is possible, many other cities of India have joined the IT march. Those cities that were already active have begun to move faster. There is, thus, a healthy competition among cities and states, which is leading to the creation of better infrastructure facilities and more attractive investment options. All this is good for the country. Let a hundred Bangalores bloom.

But the point I wish to emphasize is that it is never easy to be a pioneer and a trailblazer. When Bangalore started software development and export, all it had was a dream, and immense self-confidence. What it lacked in financial resources was more than made up by its bright and youthful human resources.

Many of the titans of Indian software industry today were middle-class professionals not long ago. They could start their own small companies only by mopping up their hard-earned but meagre savings, which were sometimes augmented by the contributions of their generous wives!

They, like many of the success stories in IT the world over, the first-generation entrepreneurs who made it big because they had a big vision—but also because IT itself is a big leveller. For the first time in modern history, here is a technology which makes even a small-town school student feel that he can aim high, aim global, and get there.

What a pleasant spectacle it is, that, a vast nationwide network of computer education centres has come into being within the past few years. It is a network that reaches in many states, even small towns and big villages—and, significantly, it has come up without any government support.

When I see the annual results of Indian software companies, the spectacular achievements of Indian software professionals and entrepreneurs abroad, and the explosion of interest in computer education in our own student community, I feel reinforced in my belief that India is destined to become a Software Superpower in the near future.

Friends, I have never used a computer in my life. However, I know what computers, and information technology, in general, are doing to change the life around us. They are revolutionizing every facet of our national—and even planetary—life.

IT is changing the way we work, do business, learn, teach, travel, communicate, entertain ourselves—and even the way we run governments and democracies. The amazing changes we have already seen in this area are nothing compared with what is in the offing in the coming years and decades.

The Internet, for example, does not just connect computers—it connects nations, economies, cultures, communities, and hundreds of millions of unique individuals on a single platform. It is truly laying the basis for a new phase of progress of human civilization.

Can India, which is the cradle of civilization, lag behind in this march of IT? No. For us in India, information technology

does not have only an economic significance. It is a civilizational necessity for us because it is going to re-establish India as a materially prosperous and culturally resurgent nation in the coming centuries.

Hence, I would like all my countrymen to know that IT is India's Tomorrow.

It is this vision which has made my Government put information technology high on our list of priorities.

The work done by the National Task Force on Information Technology and Software Development is well-known to this audience. For the first time in India, an inter-ministerial and inter-departmental mechanism at the highest level, with active participation from the IT industry, has been created to advise the Government on all IT-related matters.

The first report of the Task Force, whose focus is on software development, is presently under implementation. If there are grievances about the speed and nature of implementation, please let us know. I assure you that we will set them right.

The second report aimed at making India a major IT hardware manufacturing centre is ready. The Government will adopt the same fast-track approach to its examination and adoption as was done in the case of the first report.

The Government recognizes that creation of a nationwide high-bandwidth telecom infrastructure is crucial for all that we want to achieve in the field of information technology. As I announced only last week, we have already taken a number of bold and time-bound initiatives in this direction.

Work has begun on the formulation of a new National Telecom Policy which addresses the challenges of, as well as, the tremendous opportunities in the convergence between telecom, IT, media, and consumer electronics. I am sure the deliberations among experts in this high-level conference will provide useful ideas in policy formulation.

In my address to the annual session of FICCI in New Delhi CC-0. Nanaji Deshmukh Library, BJP, Jammu. Digitized by eGangotri

last week, I had stated that the new Internet policy would be unveiled and licenses issued to private Internet Service Providers within fifteen days. I am happy to announce today that licenses for private sector ISPs will be issued before November 7.

The aim of the new ISP policy is to achieve the fastest possible proliferation of quality Internet service all over India at an affordable price. Guided by this objective, we have drawn up a license agreement which is most customer-friendly and investor-friendly. The Internet Service Providers will pay zero license fee for the first five years—and a fee of Re. 1 thereafter. They are also free to bring in foreign equity investment to the extent of 49 per cent.

In addition to a modern telecom infrastructure, India also needs to achieve a massive augmentation of trained manpower to realize our objectives in software as well as hardware development—both for domestic and for global markets. We need to promote IT and IT-based education in a big way at all levels of the education pyramid.

The IT Task Force has envisaged the creation of facilities for networked education covering all the universities, institutions of higher and professional education, and R&D centres. As a concrete step towards the realization of this objective, I am pleased to announce that the Government will set up, through an appropriate body, a Vidya Vahini Network—or VVNet—that will synergize all the planned intranets of various agencies such as the UGC, CSIR, Ministry of HRD, and state-level networks. The first phase of VVNet will be operational by August 15, 1999.

VVNet will be a unique combination of satellite based and land-based communication that will place India in the forefront of networked education in the world. It will also connect seamlessly with the state-of-the-art Inter-University Network (IUNet) that will provide a 2.5 gigabit-bandwidth backbone connecting all the IITs, IISc Bangalore, IIT Hyderabad, and the Pune University.

This will be a project under Indo-US collaboration. A MoU to this effect has recently been signed between the Department of Telecommunications and IUNet (USA) based in the Carnegie Mellon University. I am happy to note that many eminent Indian IT professionals and scientists in USA, some of them working on the ambitious Internet 2 project, are associated with the IUNet project.

Simultaneously, the Government is planning many schemes to promote IT education in schools—especially to benefit students from rural areas and underprivileged classes. Our aim is to rapidly increase computer literacy at all levels of society, even as we make a concerted effort to eradicate illiteracy.

In this context, I congratulate the Government of Karnataka for enthusiastically implementing a pilot project of the IT Task Force in the districts of Dakshina Kannada and Udupi. These two districts have the honour or having achieved total literacy. The pilot project aims at achieving total computer literacy in the education sector above the level of class seven.

Before I conclude, I have only one message to all the Indian computer professionals and entrepreneurs who have gathered here: Think big, think global, and aim at creating products that dominate the world markets and bring high value to you and to the country. Tomorrow's economy is going to be knowledge-driven. Let Indian IT professionals and scientists and entrepreneurs drive it.

## Harmonization of Science and Spiritualism

It GIVES ME great pleasure—indeed, a sense of honour—to be here today, for I have the privilege of performing the noble duty of laying the foundation-stone of an institute that has a divine mission. The name itself Poornaprajna Institute of Scientific Research—explains the godly inspiration behind this unique centre.

This is my third public engagement of the day in Bangalore and I must say that, at a personal level, it is the most uplifting.

I met the scientists of ISRO this morning and was happy to know about their achievements in space research and its applications. I later went to inaugurate a major information technology conference. And all of us know the excitement that Information Technology is creating these days.

Both events were associated with the subject of science, they were important and interesting in their own ways. But as I come to participate in this third event of the day, I have a distinct experience of fulfilment, for your proposed institute seeks to bring science and spiritualism together. What can be more heartening than to see a respected spiritual leader like Swamy Vibudesh Theerthaji of Admar Mutt taking the lead in setting up a centre devoted to scientific research?

Yours is an ambitious mission—but also one in which reward is assured. There is a deeply entrenched misconception, especially in the western world, that science and spiritualism are two separate worlds and the twain won't meet.

Worst still a section of intellectuals calling themselves 'modern' have a derisive attitude towards spiritual people. They see in spiritualism nothing but obscurantism and rigid, blind

Speech while laying the foundation-stone of Poornaprajna Institute of Scientific Research, Bangalore, 1 November 1998

faith.

I am from neither scientific nor a spiritual background. But I know that Indian Darshana (world-view) harmonizes both science and spiritualism in a perfect way. I expressed this belief in one of my poems. The very meaning of the term "Poorna" in Indian philosophy is brilliantly scientific. The *Vedas* say:

Poornamidam Poornamadam Poornat Poornamudachyate Poornasya Poornamadaya Poornamevavashishyate

This is Whole. That is Whole.
Whole added to Whole produces Whole.
Whole deducted from Whole
Still leaves Whole.

Poornaprajna is awareness and understanding of the Whole. It is only by knowing that the entire universe is one and integral, that we can hope to gain a proper knowledge of any of its parts.

This is what our ancient seers advocated and practised with great success in the spheres of both science and spiritualism. As Dr. Paul Brunton, who has written with deep insight on the achievements of Indian Yogis such as Ramana Maharshi, has written: "What science has discovered with the help of cunning instruments, ancient sages discovered many thousand years ago with the help of concentrated thought alone".

This does not mean that scientific research does not need modern instruments and modern infrastructure. We need all that modern science has produced so far. But over and above that, we need is a holistic worldview that encompasses science, ethics and spiritual philosophy. Today, science has reached a dead-end in many areas of research. As more and more renowned scientists themselves have admitted, they need to go beyond traditional science to get answers to questions that are dogging them.

The answers lie perhaps in spiritualism. As Albert Einstein once said "If God does not exist, then we will have to invent one!"

Hence, India is ideally placed to bring about a new synthesis between science and spiritualism in the next century and millennium. Efforts like the setting up of the Poornaprajna Institute for Scientific Research are, therefore, highly commendable and deserve our fullest support.

The Poornaprajna Institute should strive to establish a creative interaction between the best minds in Indian and world science and our leading spiritual thinkers on specific issues in science and philosophy.

I am happy to note that the Institute has the benefit of the advice of such great men of Indian science as Prof. C.N.R. Rao, Prof. U.R. Rao, Dr. Raja Ramanna and Dr. P. Rama Rao. Of course, it has the guidance of Swamy Vibhudesh Teerthji and blessing of Lord Krishna.

As I lay the foundation-stone for this Institute, I hope and pray that a big and beautiful structure, with bright minds working in it, comes up soon to realize the objective which has brought all of you together.

#### A Vision for the Future

I AM VERY pleased to be here with all of you today to inaugurate Hitec City. Hyderabad is known for its fabulous jewels belonging to a bygone era. However, it has now acquired a new jewel, Hitec City, which belongs to the 21st century and is as precious as any known in the past.

As I stand before you, I have the feeling that we are not

only opening a magnificent building and a sprawling information technology complex, but are flagging off the journey of Hyderabad and Andhra Pradesh into a new era of progress, prosperity and global prestige.

It is also a tribute to the partnership between the APIDC and Larsen and Toubro. In just eighteen months, this partnership has created an impressive building, which will soon become one of the best-known addresses in India's IT industry. It is also the first of several world-class hi-tech IT habitats, which will be established in different parts of the country.

I am pleased that an Indian company has created this marvel. Truly, Larsen and Toubro has built another of the things that make India proud! I congratulate the Andhra Pradesh Government for creating a joint-venture to build and run Hitec City. India needs more such joint ventures between public and private sector companies, especially in infrastructure where projects need to be implemented much faster.

Friends, all of you are well aware of the high priority that my Government has accorded to information technology. In no other sector of the economy can India establish global dominance as quickly and certainly as in IT. It is a revolutionary tool for accelerating economic growth and ushering in educational and social development. It will help India to integrate and interact with the world as a strong, self-confident, and prosperous nation.

In setting up the National Task Force on Information Technology, we have, for the first time, created a high-level agency to not only make comprehensive recommendations on all areas of IT, but also ensured a fast-track approach to their implementation.

The first report of the Task Force, focusing mainly on software development and exports, has already been accepted by the Government and is being implemented. The report has set a target of software exports of \$50 billion by the year 2008. Some say it is an ambitious target. I, however, have not doubt that India's dynamic software industry will far surpass this figure in the next ten years.

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The second report of the IT Task Force, which is an action plan for making India a major global centre for hardware manufacturing and exports, is presently being examined by a ministerial committee. I assure you that the Government will end the long neglect and policy confusion that India's hardware industry has suffered from in the past.

The third area of information technology, which is most critical for progress in other areas, is telecommunications. India cannot become an IT superpower, unless we rapidly expand and modernize our telecom infrastructure to match the best in the world. I must point out here that we have inherited an extremely problematic legacy in this sector, because of the wrong policy and its equally wrong implementation by previous governments.

Let me assure you, however, that my Government has the necessary political will to end the deadlock in this sector and remove the obstacles in the path of stalled investments by domestic and foreign telecom companies. Towards this end, I have constituted a high-powered committee, under the chairmanship of Shri Jaswant Singh, to look into all the issues in the telecom sector and suggest fundamental reforms.

These issues include the problems arising out of the license fee structure and restrictive interconnectivity rules that hinder the growth of telecom services and the Internet in India. The committee will also formulate a new National Telecom Policy, which will be guided by the national interests, and not departmental or any other sectoral interests.

The new policy will have twin objectives. It seeks to accelerate the growth of telecom services, especially in rural areas. It will also create a competitive and well-regulated environment to harness the full benefits of convergence between telecom, IT, media and consumer electronics.

Increasing penetration of personal computers, development of trained manpower to meet the growing needs of the software and hardware industry and promotion of computer-based education are all critical components of our strategy to make India a major IT power. The Government will soon unveil major

initiatives to realize these objectives.

Among them is the idea to make available several hundred thousand low-cost multi-media Education PCs, through the Vidyarthi Computer Scheme, Shikshak Computer Scheme and School Computer Scheme.

With regard to manpower development, the IIIT concept pioneered by Andhra Pradesh has been adopted by many States. I compliment your State for uniquely combining the strengths of the Government and the IT industry for setting up the Indian Institute of Information Technology in Hyderabad. Your Chief Minister has suggested that this institute be given the status of a deemed university. The Government of India will give a very sympathetic consideration to his proposal.

Friends, there is a lot of excitement about IT in the country these days, and I share it as much as you do. I must, however, strike a note of caution here by pointing out a serious imbalance in the growth of IT in India so far. The benefits of IT cannot remain confined to the well-off and the English-educated in the urban areas. I will consider my Government's commitment to IT fulfilled only when it improves the life of the poor and the powerless.

In this context, I would like to urge professionals in the IT business, government officials and academics to address themselves to three important national tasks. First, there is an urgent need to increase the use of computers in Indian languages. There is also a need to create more and more Indian content, both in English and in Indian languages, on the Internet.

Second, we must vastly increase the application of IT for rural development and agriculture. Accurate and useful information, and its speedy flow to all those who need it, will greatly benefit farm production and the national economy. For example, one of the major factors behind the current situation of prices of essential commodities has been the lack of timely information on weather and crop conditions. The Government has, therefore, been considering the establishment of a National Centre for Crop Forecasting, which will need a very reliable and widespread IT infrastructure.

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It will also need a growing IT culture in rural areas where people can use networked computers and the information that they bring. The "Wired Villages" pilot project that the Government has been implementing in Warananagar in Maharashtra is an attempt to create such an IT culture in rural areas. Frankly, we need hundreds of such "Wired Villages" projects in different parts of the country to achieve the desired results.

The third area that needs our urgent attention is the increased use of IT to improve the Government-Citizen interface. Our long term goal should be to ensure that every department of the government works in a networked environment. File movement should be faster and transparent so that the citizens get a timely and useful response to their needs, without the usual bureaucratic harassment and frustration.

There are a number of applications, which can demonstrate that IT works for the common person. These are: the land revenue and tax departments, irrigation department, market yards, police stations, judiciary, municipal and zilla parishad offices, education departments, to name only a few. I am happy to note that the recently completed project for computerising land registration in Andhra Pradesh has reduced the processing time from seven days to one hour.

I wish all other state governments learn from your experience.

Friends, I have said that IT is India's Tomorrow. That tomorrow has well and truly come to Andhra Pradesh. The Chief Minister's vision in turning Hyderabad into Cyberabad or a "Knowledge City", attracting the attention of the IT industry around the globe. I am confident that Andhra Pradesh itself will soon become Cyber Pradesh!

With these words, I proudly inaugurate Hitec City.

### Indian Science for Peace and Prosperity

I AM DELIGHTED to be with this distinguished audience at the 86th Annual Session of the Indian Science Congress. My special greetings to the foreign scientists and the Nobel Laureates for being with us today.

I am particularly pleased that this session of the Science Congress is being held in Chennai and at Anna University, which is the pride of Tamil Nadu. This is the part of India where literature, arts, culture, architecture, spiritualism, and science have flourished in a magnificent confluence for many centuries.

This land has produced giants of literature like the saint poet Thiruvalluvar and Rashtrakavi Subramanya Bharati. It has also given birth to three of the greatest Indian scientists of this century—Sir C.V. Raman, who won the Nobel Prize for physics for the discovery of the Raman Effect; Professor S. Chandrashekar, who also won the Nobel Prize for astrophysics; and the genius of mathematics, Srinivasa Ramanujam.

Science is a major driving force behind social change. There is no aspect of modern life that is untouched by the effects and products of science and technology. More progress of science and technology has taken place in this century than in all the previous centuries of known human history. Their impact on human life, indeed on planetary life, is certain to be far more profound in the coming century.

Taken as a whole, the effects of science and technology have been both positive and negative, although, in my opinion, largely positive. All of us, scientists and non-scientists alike, have to be concerned about how to minimize their negative effects, and how to maximize their benefits for bahujan hitaya:

Speech at the 86<sup>th</sup> Annual Session of Indian Science Congress at Anna University, Chennai, 3 January 1999 CC-0. Nanaji Deshmukh Library, BJP, Jammu. Digitized by eGangotri for the greatest good of the largest number of people.

It is obvious, however, that science and technology cannot, by themselves, take their benefits to the people. They do so in specific socio-economic and political contexts, with the help of right policies and sound delivery mechanisms. That is why, science has a vital stake in progressive politics, people-oriented economics, and good governance. Progressive politics, economics and governance, in turn, have a vital stake in scientific and technological progress for it is one of the chief guarantors of prosperity and happiness.

In this context, I am reminded of what Sir C.V. Raman had said in 1948 while addressing, the annual Meeting of the Institution of Engineers. "There is only one solution for India's economic problems and that is science, and more science, and still more science."

The need to deepen, widen, and enrich India's scientific base is all the more urgent in view of the challenges of the next century and the next millennium. It is well recognized all over the world that, the societies that will survive and thrive in the face of these challenges will be "Knowledge Societies". Knowledge and its application in a competitive global environment is going to be critical to the progress of nations in the fields of economy, education, health, food and energy security, national defence, and even culture. We need to raise the knowledge level of every section of the population.

India has been the original "Knowledge Society" in the history of human civilization. This is the land where **Gyan** and **Vigyan** both flourished in antiquity. Due to historical reasons, our scientific tradition got weakened. The question before us now is: How do we, as a free nation with five decades of experience of independent development, emerge once again as a global scientific power in the early part of the next century?

I would like to outline here some tasks that the scientific community, Government, our educational institutions, industry, and society at large have to jointly accomplish. First, our scientific establishment must focus not only on quantity, but also on quality—especially such standards of quality that stand

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international scrutiny. We are legitimately proud of having the third largest stock of science and technology manpower in the world. However, in spite of this vast S&T infrastructure, should we not achieve much more than what we have done in the past fifty years? Yes, we must.

We must resolve not to remain mostly a recipient of scientific and technological knowledge from outside, but also become a giver, a major contributor. We cannot afford to purely imitate or to be satisfied with following the science other nations are doing. We have to be trendsetters in our own right in as many areas as possible.

It is very important that while developing our human resource, we take special measures to enthuse, encourage, and support women scientists and technologists to pursue their professional career. I would urge the Ministry of HRD to give high priority to the simplification of rules and regulations to encourage more and more women professionals getting involved in scientific programmes.

Of course, in today's world of inter-dependence, and at a time when research and development has become a very costly activity, our scientific community must forge the closest possible collaborations with the best institutions across the globe. However, our scientists must be prepared to deliver the goods, if any country tries to arm-twist us and deny us the opportunities of legitimate scientific cooperation.

For more than three decades, India has figured on the technology control radar screens of the advanced nations. Happily, attempts of technology denial have not been without benefits, because they have spurred our scientists to further strengthen our national capability. This has reinforced our belief in the maxim that strength respects strength.

In this context, I must compliment our nuclear scientists. Their achievements at Pokhran have filled the entire Indian scientific community with self-confidence.

The second important task before our scientific establishment is that it must get re-focussed on problem solving—especially meeting, the fell needs of congoindustry,

agriculture, and services. For example, our farm production needs to grow at least by five per cent a year. This is necessary if we have to reach the goal of creating a hunger-free society by doubling our food production in the next ten years. Our agriculture scientists have many commendable successes to their credit. But, they need to redouble their efforts to integrate our kisan community in the generation, dissemination, and application of knowledge in agricultural sciences.

Similarly, our food scientists need to develop cost-effective technologies to tackle the problem of enormous waste of fruits, vegetables, and foodgrains.

Food security, water management, energy and material conservation, low-cost housing, environment protection, maximizing our exports by achieving cost and quality competitiveness in world markets, high-quality technical education leading to self-employment opportunities—all these are crucial for our national development. In all these areas, our scientific institutions should forge closer collaborative ties with industry, agriculture, and services that has not been the case so far.

Thirdly, for creating world class scientific research, it is obvious to the distinguished audience here that our universities, R&D institutions, and institutes of higher learning must be freed from bureaucratization. Our students, teachers, and scientists should spend more time on creative research than on unproductive and needless red-tapism. I would like the Science Congress, and all the allied institutions, to come up with an action plan on this issue and implement it in a visible manner.

The fourth most important task before us is to train our children and young generation in a spirit of scientific inquiry. The study of science—in fact, the study of most subjects—in our schools and colleges suffer badly from learning by rote. Our students are not encouraged to think freely and creatively, and learn through problem solving. Without these, scientific temper is not possible. And, no nation can become a scientific power without a strong base of seientific temper.

Looking to the future, India has to concentrate on two knowledge-based sciences, and their widest possible

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applications. One of them is Information Technology. My Government has taken a number of initiatives aimed an enabling India to become a major global IT power, with software exports targeted at \$50 billion by year 2008.

The second knowledge-based area that needs even more attention is Biosciences and Biotechnology. I am happy to note that this subject is the focus of this year's Science Congress. My government's emphasis on IT stems from my firm belief about the supremacy of India's intellectual powers. However, India will have an immense opportunity if we add to IT, the advantage of our rich bio-diversity and traditional knowledge. Another multibillion-dollar opportunity, with a simultaneous impact on the health of our population, will open up then.

The international market for herbal and biotech products in the early parts of the next century is estimated to reach billions of dollars, and India should have a sizeable share of this in view of our rich bio-resources.

I understand that the Council of Scientific and Industrial Research and the Department of Biotechnology have mounted a focussed programme, which has brought together twenty of the CSIR laboratories with the well-known practitioners of traditional systems of medicine and research workers from other scientific institutions under one roof. I want to congratulate both the CSIR and the Department of Biotechnology, since this is precisely the "Team India" spirit that I had emphasized during the Shanti Swarup Bhatnagar Awards ceremony.

Such a programme should not be confined to healthcare issues of only tropical areas but also those pertinent to the rest of the world like AIDS, Alzheimer disease, arthritis, brain disorders, various cases of cancer, etc. I suggest that the good beginning made by CSIR should be followed with multiples of such programmes with a very wide Indian knowledge network.

This is the last session of the Science Congress in this century. By the time you assemble on the same day next year, it will be the first gathering of the Science Congress in the 21st century. It is only appropriate that we use the ensuing one year to infuse new dynamism in placements in the confidence of the session of the Science Congress in this century.

education.

In this endeavour, our scientists cannot be unmindful of a peculiar challenge before global science in the coming century and millennium. It is the challenge of integrating the knowledge of man's outer space—that is, Science—with the knowledge of this inner space—that is, Spiritualism. The two have remained largely separate and unconnected. Most of the scientific advances in the 20th century, and in the preceding centuries, have occurred on the assumption that science has little to do with the knowledge systems of the spiritual world.

This assumption, however, is lately coming under increasing scrutiny. The knowledge of quantum physics is leading to inquiry into consciousness. The knowledge of computers is leading to inquiry into human intelligence. The knowledge of neuro-sciences is leading to inquiry into the working of human mind. In medicine, the knowledge of heart and other diseases is leading to inquiry into the positive effects of Yoga.

Interestingly, the assumption that Science and Spiritualism are unrelated is being questioned by many leading scientists themselves. For example, David Bohm, one of the greatest physicists of this century, has said, "To understand Nature, let us first understand the nature of Existence." This view powerfully echoes the Upanishadic insight on the unity of all existence: "Isavasyam idam sarvam yat kincha jagatyam jagat"—Whatever exists is permeated by the Divine.

It is obvious, therefore, that science in the coming times will have to strive for a new integration of knowledge systems that combine reasoning, ethics, individual behaviour, social relations, and the environment. In short, the world will have to move towards harmonization of science and spiritualism in order to attain peace, prosperity, and happiness for all. It is my belief that Indian scientists and intellectuals can make a major contribution in this global effort.

I thank the Indian Science Congress and the Anna University for having given me the opportunity to share some of my thoughts with you.

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## Modernization Needed in Sugarcane Industry

I AM PLEASED to be here with you this morning to inaugurate the 23rd Congress of the International Society of Sugarcane Technologists. I am happy to know that this Congress is taking place in India after 43 years. I welcome the foreign participants and wish them a pleasant and fruitful stay.

It is believed that India is the original home of sugarcane. The earliest reference to sugarcane is traced to the *Artharva Veda*, one of the oldest and sacred scriptures of India. There have been references to the Buddha being known as the "King of Sugarcane" in Buddhist literature. Alexander the Great is said to have taken sugarcane from India to the West around 325 B.C.

It is because of India's long and rich tradition of growing sugarcane, that thousands of Indians were taken as indentured labourers during the colonial period to distant lands like Mauritius, Trinidad and Tobago, and Guyana. In independent India, thanks to our hardworking farmers, technicians and entrepreneurs, India has become the largest producer and consumer of cane sugar.

Sugar plays a very significant role in India's agricultural and industrial economy. Although sugarcane occupies barely three per cent of India's total cultivable area, about forty million people are dependent on sugarcane farming and the sugar industry. A unique feature of the Indian sugar industry is that more than 58 per cent of production takes place in cooperative factories, which are also the focal point of multi-dimensional socio-economic development in rural areas.

The Government of India has taken a number of steps recently to revitalize the sugar industry and enable it to reap the benefits

of liberalisation. I believe that the industry can grow best when it is freed from bureaucratic control. Accordingly, the sugar industry was delicensed on first September last year. This will allow the faster creation of new capacity, both in the existing sugar mills and in new ones. Larger and better equipped sugar mills will result in better quality sugar.

Decentralization of decision-making is another dimension of reforms in the Indian sugar industry and trade. We have given the States the freedom to decide how many sugar dealers are needed, and removed the maximum stock holding limits.

As a result of these and other measures, I am happy to note that the price of sugar has remained largely stable in the last one year, compared to the prices of many other commodities.

Technological development in sugarcane cultivation and sugar industry is vital for raising both productivity and prosperity in rural India. To achieve this, the Government runs the Sugar Technology Mission, which has developed five new technologies, which are being applied in many factories. Some of these like low pressure extraction, cane separation system, and sulphur burner have been commercialized for the first time in the world.

Some of the specific areas where further research and development is needed are: reducing the water consumed in growing sugarcane; capacity utilization of factories; maximizing recovery of sugar from sugarcane; energy conservation; improving the quality of sugar; and minimizing environmental pollution. Use of information technology holds a major promise for the success of all these tasks.

Our sustained efforts in sugarcane breeding have raised cane productivity to world levels. There is, however, a great scope and need for further improvement. India is a country with diverse agro-climatic zones. While cane productivity in the tropical areas has been impressive, it is lower in the subtropical zones.

Equally important is the challenge to raise sugarcane

productivity in small landholdings. So far the impact of technology on cane cultivation by small farmers has been minimal in most countries. Experience shows that education and active involvement of farmers are a key guarantor for the success of technology outreach programmes.

Development of by-products of sugar is vital for improving the industry's financial viability. India has gained useful experience in commercializing these value-addition processes. Bagasse has been successfully used in the production of newsprint and paper in India. Similarly, the use of filter cake enriched by distillery effluents for composting has been successfully tried recently. There could be similar uses of other by-products.

Another issue which I commend for discussion in this Conference is the financial needs of sugar factories for technological upgradation. The Government operates the Sugar Development Fund, which provides soft terms for cane development programmes, modernization, and rehabilitation of existing sugar mills. I would urge the managements of sugar factories to increase internal generation of surpluses for this purpose. While technological inputs are necessary to achieve efficiency, cost-reduction, and quality enhancement, equally important are non-technological factors such as better management. I am sure the delegates will learn much from each other's experiences in this critical area.

Co-generation of electricity by sugar mills is a potential low-cost source of energy. It is also environment friendly. There are newer technologies which reduce the moisture content on cane, improving the viability of cogeneration projects. These and other related technologies must be developed and spread fast so that the sugar industry can improve its energy efficiency—and even earn more by selling surplus electricity.

Distinguished delegates, global cooperation in R&D is the key that unlocks the gate to global prosperity. This is true about sugar technologies, too.

With these words, I have great pleasure to inaugurate this Congress I wish would be shall success. Jammu. Digitized by eGangotri

#### IV Education, Art and Culture

#### Literacy Lights the Lamp of Knowledge

**W**E HAVE GATHERED here today to observe International Literacy Day 1998. This is an occasion when we reaffirm our commitment to making every Indian literate.

We do so today by joining Governments and citizens across the world, in a spirit of collaborative partnership, to rededicate ourselves to the cause of universal literacy and life-long learning.

September 8 is a day of affirmation and action, both nationally and internationally, to create a fully literate planetary population in the early years of the 21st century.

Literacy is a fundamental human right of every citizen. It is the lamp that lights the path of knowledge and progress in a person's life. It also enables every citizen to make their full contribution to the progress of the nation and the human race.

For us in India, International Literacy Day sends a far more urgent message. India has the largest number of non-literate people in the world—about a third of the world total of around 900 million.

This reality is unacceptable to any sensitive and patriotic Indian. It is antithetical to the fact that India is the land of the world's oldest living civilization, which has always worshipped knowledge and learning.

It is also totally incompatible with the determination of today's resurgent India to emerge as a strong, prosperous and self-confident nation claiming its rightful place in the world community.

We recognize that a country encumbered by millions of illiterate citizens would be intrinsically less equipped to cope

with the challenges and opportunities of an intensely competitive world. In order to live and thrive in a knowledgedriven era, we must create a nation of fully literate citizens.

At the same time, I wish to dispel a misconception that often clouds some people's understanding of the problem of illiteracy in India. Many of our fellow citizens may be non-literate, but they are by no means devoid of education.

Our non-literate brethren among tribal, dalit and OBC communities are repositories of amazing knowledge and practical skills acquired through tradition-based or occupation-based self-learning.

This is also true about our non-literate women who, apart from possessing a lot of useful knowledge, also pass on precious cultural and ethical values from generation to generation.

I say this not to belittle the importance of literacy or the urgent need to eradicate illiteracy. My purpose of underscoring this fact is rather to urge the policy makers and literacy activists to develop a healthy respect for the existing knowledge resources of our non-literate sisters and brothers.

Our literacy programmes have the best chance of succeeding when they are anchored in the soil of people's actual experiences and aspirations.

We should also bear in mind that economic development is not an automatic guarantor of literacy and education. This is evident from the fact that even a rich nation like the United States of America has as many as 40 million people who lack the reading and writing skills.

This startling fact suggests that developing countries like India must evolve literacy and education programmes that conform to our own needs, resources and traditions.

My Government is committed to according the highest priority to eradication of illiteracy. We have pledged in the National Agenda for Governance that we shall seek to provide Education for All. At the same time, I wish to restate a truth, which has so far been inadequately understood, that removal of illiteracy cannot be accomplished by the efforts of the Central and State Governments alone, much less by any single ministry or department in New Delhi or in State capitals.

It demands the collective and coordinated participation of all sections of society—governmental agencies, nongovernmental organizations, religious and cultural establishments, student and youth organizations, business community and the media.

In short, a sustained mass movement alone can take India towards the goal of total literacy in the shortest period of time.

In this context, I am pleased to acknowledge the good work done by the National Literacy Mission since its inception in 1988. The country has gained valuable experience from the Total Literacy Campaigns launched in the early '90s.

For the first time since Independence a planned, coordinated and comprehensive district-level drive was launched with the involvement of Central and State governments, zilla parishads, panchayats, voluntary organizations and educational establishments

Through massive, participative mass campaigns of Total Literacy, we have been able to make over 68 million people literate—60 per cent of whom are women.

As many as 234 districts have completed the first phase of basic literacy to adults in the age group of 15-35 and are now implementing post-literacy and continuing education programmes. A large number of districts, beginning with Ernakulam in Kerala, have declared themselves Total Literacy Districts.

The positive developmental fallout of successful Total Literacy Campaigns is already visible in many parts of the country. There has been an increase in the demand for primary education, particularly among girls.

A significant improvement is visible in practices of family welfare, health, hygiene and immunisation leading to a lowering of the infant and maternal mortality rate, greater awareness about the environment and better agricultural practices.

Successful literacy campaigns have also resulted in considerable social cohesion at the local level and the administration becoming more responsive and responsible.

Perhaps the most visible transformation effected by these campaigns is in the empowerment of women. With one-third of the seats in panchayats and municipal councils reserved for women, the need for them to become literate has become all the more vital.

Political empowerment and illiteracy cannot go together. For it is rightly said that the knowledge of the *word* is necessary for a greater knowledge of the *world*.

I must admit, however, that the initial momentum of the Total Literacy Campaigns has somehow been lost in recent years. I would urge all those associated with this mission to self-critically analyze its successes and failures, and the causes thereof.

There is a need to relaunch the campaign after a thorough brainstorming at all levels. Today I ask the National Literacy Mission to conduct a review of its experience so far and come forward with a revitalized programme, within the next three months, to achieve the goal of making 100 million adults literate by the end of 1999.

In this context, I would urge the planners and activists of literacy programmes to pay special attention to adoption of more non-formal and participatory methods for imparting Continuing Education for neo-literates, school drop-outs, out-of-school children and other interested learners.

We should also have schemes to suitably honour literacy volunteers who show exceptional dedication and consistency—and they are to be found in large numbers all over the country.

On the occasion of International Literacy Day, I congratulate all of you here and many more of those who could not be here, for keeping the flame of literacy bright and shining, and taking it to the remotest village and the poorest slum in the country.

Let us today pledge to eradicate the evil of illiteracy from this land of great scholars, sages, scientists and cultural giants. Let us make India a fully literate and intellectually vibrant country capable of providing to the world the same philosophical leadership that it did in the past and which is its future due.

#### Bharatiya Vidya Bhavan: India's Cultural Ambassador

f IT GIVES ME great pleasure to be amongst you at the New York Centre of the Bharatiya Vidya Bhavan.

The Bharatiya Vidya Bhavan has been spreading India's wisdom to the rest of the world ever since the establishment of its first overseas centre in England in 1971. Its seven centres outside India have been like seven bright stars—Saptarshi, if you will—radiating the light of the Vedic credo *Vasudhaiva Kutumbakam*: The entire world is one family.

It is only appropriate that New York Centre should have Professor Robert Goheen as its Chairman. He was, as you know, the United States' Ambassador to India. He continues to play the Ambassador's part even today—however, with an

Speech at a reception organized by Bharatiya Vidya Bhavan, New York, 26 September 1998

interesting role reversal. Now, as the head of the Bhavan's Centre in New York, he is India's cultural Ambassador to the United States.

I have had a long and close relationship with the Bharatiya Vidya Bhavan. But, friends, this relationship got a lot closer last week. On September 21, the Krishna Bihari Vajpayee Trust, which has been set up in memory of my late father, opened a computer training centre at my ancestral home in Gwalior.

It is meant for students from under-privileged families. It has been established in collaboration with the Bharatiya Vidya Bhavan's Gandhi Institute for Computer Education and Information Technology.

Some people might wonder what Bharatiya Vidya Bhavan or the name of Mahatma Gandhi has got to do with information technology. I would say that information technology is going to fulfil some of the key components of the Bhavan's vision.

And this point was perceptively made by the Bhavan's Chairman, Bharat Ratna Shri C. Subramaniam, at the Gwalior function.

Shri Subramaniam explained that Gandhiji stood for decentralization of economic activity, governance, and social life. In the industrial age, this was not possible because industrial civilization necessarily led to centralization and concentration of resources and powers.

In the coming age of Information Revolution, technology itself will make decentralization and democratization possible.

Friends, we should not, however, make the mistake of believing that technology alone can be the saviour of mankind. Technology, even information technology, is at best an enabling tool for progressive change.

The tool requires responsible hands guided by wise minds to put it to the right use. This is where the central mission of the Bharatiya Vidya Bhavan asserts its relevance. The key word in the Bhavan's mission is "vidya". Vidya is more than information. It is more than knowledge even. Our ancient Rishis explained its meaning very well. They said—that alone its education, which liberates.

What the world, on the threshold of the 21st century, needs today is liberative education. Its meaning is best explained in the words of Dr. K.M. Munshi, the founder of the Bharatiya Vidya Bhavan.

What does Bharatiya Vidya stand for? He asked and answered it himself:

"Bharatiya Shiksha must be formative more than informative and cannot have for its ends mere acquisition of knowledge. Its legitimate sphere is not only to develop natural talent but also to shape them as to enable them to absorb and express the permanent values of Bharatiya Vidya.

Bharatiya Shiksha must take into account not only the full growth of a student's personality, but also the totality of his relations and lead him to the highest self-fulfilment of which he's capable."

In other words, true education encourages open minds to engage in ceaseless learning. This is what is proclaimed by the Bhavan's motto—Let noble thoughts come to us from all sides.

It should be obvious to anybody that this lofty understanding of education has universal relevance in our times.

Education of this kind alone can ultimately liberate the human race from the shackles of materalism, chauvinism, fanaticism and violence. As the world becomes a Global Village, we need non-political and non-governmental institutions like the Bharatiya Vidya Bhavan to disseminate the essential wisdom of Indian civilisation that alone will sustain tomorrow's global civilization.

I once again congratulate the New York Centre of the Bharatiya Vidya Bhavan for the excellent work it is doing. I wish it all the success in its future endeavours.

### Education: Critical Input for All-round Growth

I AM PLEASED to inaugurate this Conference of Education Ministers and Education Secretaries. Very important issues concerning education will be discussed and deliberated upon here by both the Central and the State Governments, in the spirit of partnership and democratic federalism.

Human resource development is the most critical area in nation building. After all, national development depends on having educated citizens, rural development, the productivity of workers, women's empowerment, health and nutrition, social justice, sustained economic growth—I could go on adding to this list of national tasks where education is the common denominator.

At the turn of the century, Swami Vivekananda had diagnosed the ills that plague our society and had said, "A nation is advanced in proportion as education and intelligence spread among the masses . . . If we are to rise again, we shall have to do it, by spreading education among the masses. Educate and raise the masses and thus alone national revival is possible".

After independence, India has posted significant achievements in education. Yet, our efforts have fallen short of what nation-building demands. Professor Amartya Sen, this Year's Nobel Prize winner in economics, says that governments in developing countries, including ours, have intervened a lot to solve problems in the economic and business sectors. However, they have not intervened enough in the social sectors of health and education. This is a valid criticism. To remedy this imbalance is our collective task. The Centre and the States

must reaffirm their commitment to the social sector, especially education.

You will agree with me that what needs most attention is primary education. it is the base of everything. Primary education is the most neglected area in the entire education system. We must restore primacy to primary education in our education policy and planning. Primary education needs more money, yes. More money to build and maintain proper school building; equip them with books and blackboards, and other instruments of teaching. And, money also to convert single-teacher schools to multiple-teacher schools. Money is always scarce. A large part of the education budget goes to pay teachers' salaries. With the recent increases in their pay, there will be even less money for the other equally important items.

We, therefore, need to look at other sources of funding. Private enterprise is now entering professional education. Can we not come up with innovative ways that attract local communities and business to contribute to the upkeep of primary schools? Can we not make higher education pay more for itself than is the case now, so that primary education is better endowed?

More than money, primary education needs better administrative and managerial skills, and, of course, a far stronger political will. It is sad that this most important area of nation building does not attract the best and the brightest administrators. Other departments are considered more "glamorous". Primary education is often not the first choice of those who are assigned there.

This must change. The most important thing that we can do to improve primary education is to ensure that the best administrators are applying their minds to improving the primary education system. I have some other thoughts that I would like to share with you on the subject. While governments have done a lot to improve teachers' salaries, they have neglected the task of improving their working and teaching environment.

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Teachers' views are often ignored—or not even sought in education planning. The bureaucrats in the education department have an upper hand and often boss over teachers and principals. This is wrong. All those associated with education should understand that a good teacher does not look for a good salary alone. He values even more a better working environment, where he feels that he is valued and has a say in the running of his institution. The quality of municipal and other government schools is inferior to that of private schools. One reason, of course, is that richer parents pay for and then demand better service from private schools. In governmentrun schools, where the parents are too poor and themselves uneducated, they cannot demand better service. This places a bigger responsibility on us to run our schools better in the absence of parental demand. Can we face up to that responsibility?

How do we make parents and communities more responsive about the school in their midst? This is one of the great challenges before the education sector. If we want the villagers to consider the school to be "theirs" then they must have a sense of responsibility and ownership. Here I have a suggestion. Education is a state subject. The 73rd and 74th Amendments have decentralized powers to the Panchayats and municipalities. In this spirit of decentralization, I propose that we transfer administrative control over village schools to Panchayats, Mandal Panchayats and the Zilla Parishads.

The teacher's qualification and salaries and the syllabus can still be set by the State Governments but let the Panchayat bodies manage the primary schools. Funds for this can be transferred to the Panchayats from the State government. One of the reasons why developed countries have become so, is their superior universities and technical institutions. India's higher education system also needs improvement so that our universities and colleges are run as well as their counterparts abroad.

We need a crash programme to improve the condition of our universities. Can we not ensure that at least one university in each state becomes a centre of excellence and that at least a CC-0. Nanaji Deshmukh Library, BJP, Jammu. Digitized by eGangotri dozen Indian universities build a global reputation? We also need to draw up a plan to enable the best NRI talent in the education sector to come back and teach in our universities.

One reason for the falling standards of our universities and colleges is that the best and brightest people seem no longer interested in teaching. Their low salaries used to be the reason, but the Government has recently raised the emoluments of college teachers to partly solve this problem. Here again, the big challenge is to de-politicize and debureaucratize the functioning of our universities and colleges, so that teachers feel that they have a sense of fulfilment and achievement. Our regulatory bodies like the University Grants Commission, the All India Council of Technical Education, and the Medical Council of India are all doing good work. However, their functioning needs to improve, especially in their relations with State governments.

Our formal education set up could learn a lesson or two from the private sector companies in the area of quality and management. Indian companies that are in the education business, especially those who are in the computer education business are doing extremely well. They are now worth hundreds of crores. There is, of course, excessive commercialization, which is undesirable and must be curbed. However, let us look at the positive side.

Their success in creating a relevant syllabus, attracting students, training them and now their global forays should be emulated by our universities. They too need to be as dynamic and enterprising as these companies. We also need to create a synergy between the formal and the non-formal sectors in education in order to pool their respective strengths.

Apart from looking at "how" people are to be taught, we also need to look at "what" is taught. We must update our syllabi, at all levels, to reflect the rapidly changing world. We must also provide modern tools which would help in promoting a scientific temperament in our children.

Our schools must also impart value education. They must

let every student have an understanding of, and respect for, all the faiths in India and pride in our national culture. There must be no place for religious bigotry and intolerance. While promoting unity, we should keep in mind our diversity of religion, language and ethnicity.

One problem that haunts our entire education system is the much-less-than proportionate participation of women. Studies have shown that educating women is the most profitable investment that a country can make. The return on this investment—in better health and hygiene, slower population growth, empowerment, financial independence, and the transmission of all these values to the next generation of girls—is more than the returns of building a power plant or a road or any other spending that the government does.

The National Agenda for Governance has committed my government to giving free education for women to the graduation level. This commitment will be more effective, if it is combined with the other programmes on maternal and child health, rural development, and the ICDS. Let us not have departmentalization when we talk of our largest disadvantaged group—our women.

Illiteracy is another course that India suffers from. The National Literacy Mission has taken many steps to remove it. I believe that the formal education system should be used to support its efforts. Teachers, students and others in the education system can and must participate in the programmes of the National Literacy Mission so that illiteracy in India is removed as fast as possible. Education in India has many problems. The most important requirement for finding the right solution is perfect coordination between the Centre and State Governments based on a common approach and common goals.

I am confident that all of you together will come up with workable solutions and that you will go back to your States with a strategy to implement them in the shortest possible time.

# Information Technology: Powerful Tool for Acquiring Knowledge

I AM PLEASED to inaugurate the eighth centre of Bharatiya Vidya Bhavan's Gandhi Institute of Computer Education and Information Technology. I have also had the honour of inaugurating the seventh centre of the Institute in September. It has been set up at my ancestral home in Gwalior by a Trust established in my father's memory. It provides free computer education to students from underprivileged sections of society.

Many may wonder why this Institute, which is dedicated to providing training in information technology, bears the name of Mahatma Gandhi. There is a misconception that Gandhiji was opposed to technology and here we are dealing with information technology which is at the cutting edge of hi-tech. It is necessary to remove this misconception. I am not an expert in IT; I have not even used a computer anytime in my life. But I know that information technology promotes some of the essential components of the Gandhian and Indian vision of development.

First and foremost, computers and other advances in IT, such as the Internet, are a powerful tool for acquiring knowledge. And Gyan, as we all know, is highly extolled in our culture. Gyan Marg is, indeed, one of the paths to liberation.

Secondly, IT is a major leveller in society. It empowers people even from underpriviledged classes to quickly come up in life. It rewards people with ideas and innovativeness—as is amply borne out by the success stories of Indian IT professionals and entrepreneurs abroad. In recent years, we have many

Speech at the inauguration of the eighth centre of Bharatiya Vidya Bhavan's Gandhi Institute of Computer Education and Information Technology, Mumbai, 6 November 1998

success stories in India, too.

IT will increase employment opportunities and generate wealth, both directly and indirectly. Shri Murli Deora tells me that all those who have completed their computer education course at the Gandhi Institute have got well-paid jobs in business and in industry.

Thirdly, IT will lead to decentralization of production and decongestion of our urban centres. When the whole world gets connected, people will be able to do their work wherever they are. In the highly driven world of the 21st century what will be movable is information and not people.

In short, IT is rapidly revolutionizing every aspect of our economy, education, communication, and entertainment. That is why, at a recent meeting in Bangalore, I urged the people to realize that IT stands for India's tomorrow.

For me, it is very satisfying to see the rapid spread of Information Technology in the country. But we need to march faster. Which is why, my Government has set up the National Task Force on Information Technology and Software Development.

In a short span of six months, the Government has taken a number of initiatives to promote IT in the country. We have already accepted, and started implementing, the first report of the Task Force focusing on software development for exports. Our aim is to achieve software exports worth 50 billion dollars by the year 2008.

Just two days ago, the Task Force has submitted its second report aimed at making India a major hardware manufacturing centre. It is presently being examined by a ministerial committee.

I announced the salient features of the New Internet Policy in Bangalore last week. It allows companies in the private sector to become Internet Service Providers. As promised, licences will be issued to private ISP's before November, 7.

We believe that the creation of a modern high speed telecom infrastructure is a precondition for making India an IT CC-0. Nanaji Deshmukh Library, BJP, Jammu. Digitized by egangom

superpower. The Government has, therefore, initiated major steps to resolve outstanding issues in the telecom sector.

The spread of IT depends on two more factors; cheaper computers and more people trained to use them.

In order to address these issues, the Government will soon unveil three schemes aimed at increasing the number of PCs in the education sector Vidyarthi Computer Scheme, Shikshak Computer Scheme and School Computer Scheme. The highlight of these schemes will be to make available a multimedia Education PC costing less than Rs. 25,000. The schemes will have innovative financial packages to make a computer affordable even to ordinary families.

In recent years, there has been a huge increase in the number of computer training institutes. Every small town has such institutes, which are training young, and not-so-young people to use computers.

Some of these institutes have become huge companies worth hundreds of crores, thanks to the efficient way they run their business. Our colleges and universities can learn some lessons from them.

I congratulate these Institutes for rapidly spreading computer awareness and training many people to use computers. However, these institutes suffer from one flaw. They, understandably, cater only to those who can afford their high fees. It is a sign of the times that many middle class families are spending most of their savings in sending their children to these training institutes.

However, if computer education is confined only to those who know English and those who can afford it, India will not become an IT superpower. Rather, the divide between the IT literate and the IT illiterate will strengthen the existing divides in our society.

There is an urgent need, therefore, to develop IT in Indian languages and also to increase Indian content, especially educational content, on the Internet.

Before I conclude, I applaud the Bharatiya Vidya Bhavan for setting up the Gandhi Institute of Computer Education and Information Technology to provide free basic training on computers to the educated unemployed.

It is difficult to run a computer-training institute without charging fees. To sustain this noble task, I urge many of our wealthy compatriots to donate space or money to such organizations that provide computer training to the poor

I hope that the Gandhi Institute will set up many more centres soon, especially in rural and tribal areas. I urge the students of this centre and the other centres to make full use of this opportunity and create wealth for yourselves and for your country.

### An Integration of Knowledge and Spiritual Values

I FEEL HONOURED and privileged to be invited by you to deliver this year's convocation address at this unique Temple of Learning. I call it a temple with a conscious intent.

The Indian tradition believes that Truth or Sathya is God. As the Sai model of education affirms, the students of this university are not just students, but seekers of Truth. The divine guidance of Bhagwan Sathya Sai Baba has, thus, elevated even education to the level of worship of God.

The very name of this institute explains its purpose and its mission—namely, that it is a centre for Higher Learning.

Usually, this term "centre of higher learning" means a university or a specialized institution that provides a relatively advanced level of education. The world "higher" means more of the same thing; it does not connote a different paradigm of learning.

Sri Sathya Sai Institute of Higher Learning, however, imparts education that truly belongs to an altogether higher category of human quest. It is an experience of learning that is holistic and based on a deeper understanding of Man and his purpose of being.

Our scriptures have defined *mukti* or liberation to be the goal of education—*Savidya yaa vimuktaye*. Liberation not after death, but on this very earth and in this very life. The *Vidya* imparted in the Sathya Sai Vishwavidyalaya is of the liberative kind. It addresses both the *apara* and *para* aspects of man and society.

It pursues the knowledge of the material world and the outer environment. Equally importantly, it also trains the students in the spiritual heritage of the world and refines their knowledge of man's inner environment. The higher learning that the pupils here seek, and receive, facilitates their integral development.

This integration of wordly knowledge and spiritual values makes the students more competent to handle the complex challenges of the professional world they will now enter. At the same time, it also enables them to become better human beings with a finer, culturally richer character.

The Sathya Sai Institute of Higher Learning, thus, meets the high ideal that Swami Vivekananda had set for education in India: Man-making and Nation-building.

The Indian view of education aims at an even higher ideal. It seeks to equip the students for the task of not only nation-building, but also world-building. This ideal is far more relevant today in the age of globalization and than it ever was in the past.

"World-building" as an ideal of education may seem grandiose, especially in the context of the numerous problems

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in our own country's educational system. But all those who understand education in its true sense are well aware that education today must address not only national concerns, but also pressing global concerns.

At no time in history has the world been so interconnected and inter-dependent as it is today in the age of globalization. The problems being faced by people in different parts of the world are becoming increasingly common. These problems may show local forms and manifestations. However, very often they have global roots. Naturally, their solution also requires a global approach and a global effort.

The convergence of the local and the global is true not only for problems in the economic sphere. It is increasingly visible even in issues relating to culture, religion and social customs.

How has modern education responded to this new reality? It has begun taking note of the phenomenon in the material sphere, but it has scarcely started to grapple with the issues in the moral sphere.

Let me illustrate. Thanks to globalization, issues such as management of the economy, stability of national currencies, trade and investments, environmental protection, harnessing of natural resources, regional and global security, etc, are no longer exclusively national concerns. They call for increasing global cooperation among nations. As we all know, modern education—especially that imparted in reputed universities in India and aborad—is constantly upgrading itself, to understand these issues in a global perspective and suggest appropriate responses.

However, there is another set of problems facing the world in the era of globalization, which modern education has largely bypassed. These are problems arising out of the neglect of the ethical, cultural, and spiritual upbringing of people. If we take a historical view of the development of the human race, we cannot but ask ourselves some deeply disturbing questions, which are relevant to all countries, not just to India:

Where is man in all the breathtaking progressing technology,

communication, and commerce in the 20th century?

Why are love, empathy, cooperation, and adherence to truth missing to today's quest only for material pleasure?

Where is character and compassion in the pursuit of comfort? Where is integrity and inner purity in the pursuit of prestige and power? Where is God-consciousness in the world of gizmos?

The social fabric in all nations of the world, including in traditional societies like India, is coming under increasing strain due to this imbalance in human development. If education continues to neglect this imbalance, the consequences for us in India and for the entire human race would be ruinous.

In this context, the words of Bhagwan Sathya Sai Baba strike the right note of caution. "As science develops and technology advances, humility and mutual love should also develop to the same extent; otherwise man becomes a menace to man. Education is no education unless it extracts the milk of human kindness, kinship, and brotherhood, and makes for a universal diffusion of this feeling, administering at the same time, an intensive as well as extensive knowledge of the true nature of man and human society."

The higher learning that your Institute pursues and imparts is "higher" precisely because it intergrates all the concerns of humanity in the age of globalization. It is a new experiment in education that is deeply rooted in Indian soil and culture and philosophy, and yet, has a universal appeal.

Friends, when we say we need education that is rooted in Indian soil and culture, we do not mean teaching or promoting the tradition of any particular religion. Sarva Pantha Samabhaav is the defining principle of Indian culture. Our country has always respected the spiritual heritage of all religions. Bigotry in education and anywhere else is unthinkable in India.

This ideal is best illustrated by the emblem of Bhagwan Sathya Sai Baba's establishment itself, which depicts the symbols of all the world's religions. There is no other country in the world where you can see such a sight.

Rooting our education system in Indian soil and culture also does not mean going back to some ideal or practice of the past, or shutting one's eyes to the positive achievements in education around the world. The right approach in this matter has been incisively stated by Maharshi Aurobindo in his essays on "National Education".

He writes: "We cannot be satisfied with a mere revival of some past principle, method, and system that may have happened to prevail at one time in India, however, great it was or in consonance with our past civilization and culture. That reversion would be a sterile and impossible effort, hopelessly inadequte to the pressing demands of the present and the far greater demands of our future."

At the same time, Aurobindo warns us against aping the English or American university education or some variation on them with a gloss of Indian colour. Whatever the difficulty of giving it shape, he says, we need an Indian system of education that is proper to the "developing soul of India, to her future need, to the greatness of her coming self-creation, to her eternal spirit."

I must admit here that, even after five decades of freedom, India is far away from this model of education. Our biggest failure has been the inability of the formal education system to build the character of our students and strengthen their ethical and cultural foundation. In the words of Bhagwan Sathya Sai Baba, "Character is the hallmark of man. A life without character is a shrine without light, a coin that is counterfeit, a kite with the string broken."

Character-building comes with a careful and sustained nurturing of samskaar—that is, right thought and conduct. Our schools and colleges have, by and large, neglected the development of samskaar of their pupils. They focus almost exclusively on imparting information and skills. They place little emphasis on value education, which alone can prepare CC-0. Nanaji Deshmukh Library, BJP, Jammu. Digitized by eGangotri

our students to discern between right and wrong.

The role of teachers in building both the character and intellect of their students cannot be overemphasized. Unfortunately, owing to both internal and external reasons, our teacher community has not been discharging this role satisfactorily. Our schools and colleges cannot be seen as education factories that mechanically churn out degree-holders. After all, a teacher is entrusted with the responsibility of moulding a living and creative mind into a useful citizen and a better human being.

In order to discharge this responsibility well, teachers must themselves be men and women of creativity and character. They should develop a keen interest in study and research, adopt innovative methods of teaching and, above all, set a standard for the students with their conduct. Does not society have the right to expect this from our teachers?

It is obvious, of course, that value education cannot be imparted by the formal educaton system alone. Strong family relations and a healthy socio-cultural environment play a far bigger role in shaping the character of our young people. In other words, education is not something that a person receives within the four walls of a classroom and for a specified number of years in school and college. It is a life-long effort at self-development.

How do we attain this ideal of education? This is a question that all of us must ponder over. It is true that the Government has a major responsibility in this regard. I also agree with Bhagwan Sathya Sai Baba's exhortation that "either the Government must have the capacity to educate and reform the people, or the people must have the capacity to educate the Government."

What I wish to stress here is that the people must increase their own capacity and activity to reform the education system. Experience has shown that educational institutions and activities sustained by non-governmental initiatives produce far better results than those run by government bureaucracies. Ideally, the Government's role in education should be limited to broad policy formulation, regulation, and resource provision, where necessary. For the rest, the various constituents of society itself must maximize their autonomous activity in the educational sphere.

There is an urgent need for a national debate to effect fundamental reforms in education. The aim of these reforms should be to reduce the State's executive and interventionist role in education, and fully harness the human and material resources of civil society. I call upon academic institutions, educational trusts and societies, teachers' and students' associations, business organizations, religious and cultural bodies and, of course, political parties to come up with creative solutions to the many challenges in our education system.

Friends, I am not an educationist. However, I have had the honour of having worked with one of the greatest educationists of our time, Dr. Shyama Prasad Mookerjee, who was also an eminent national leader. On this occasion, I can do no better than to conclude my speech by recalling the stirring words from the convocation address delivered by Dr. Mookerjee at the Nagpur University in 1936, when he was only 35 years old.

"An Indian university must regard itself as one of the living organs of national reconstruction. It must discover the best means of blending together both the spiritual and material aspects of life. It must equip its alumni, irrespective of caste, creed or sex, with individual fitness, not for its own sake, not merely for adorning varied occupations and professions, but in order to teach them how to merge their individuality in the common cause of advancing the progress and prosperity of their motherland and upholding the highest traditions of human civilization. That constitutes the perennial ideal of a university rooted in Indian soil and expresses one of the gretaest needs of the hour."

I have quoted from the speech of my leader and "teacher" only to express my own appreciation of how closely the Sathya Sai Institute of Higher Learning has realized this ideal of an Indian University.

I seek the blessing of the revered Bhagwan Baba and extend my best wishes to this year's graduates in their professional and personal lives.

# Enlarge the Horizon of Intellectual Quest

I AM DELIGHTED to participate in the concluding celebrations of the Golden Jubilee of Sree Narayana College in Kollam.

Meeting students and young people is always a matter of joy for me. I see in them eyes that sparkle and faces that dream. The sight fills me with hope and confidence about the future of our nation.

This hope and confidence in the future of India, however, increases multifold when I come to a college like this which is itself the creation of a revolutionary dream—a dream born in the trials, tribulations and turbulence of India's freedom movement.

Sree Narayana College is not an ordinary educational institution. It is the product of a social revolution inspired by the teachings and the personal mission of one of the greatest reformers of modern India—Sree Narayana Guru.

It opened the gates of education to those sections of our society, which were denied the opportunity in the orthodox social order. It thereby established the principle that education, including higher education, is the birth right of every human

Speech at the closing ceremony of the Golden Jubilee celebration of Sree Narayana College, Kollam, 17 January 1999

being—of the poor as well as of the rich, of the so-called "backward" classes as much as the "forward" classes in society.

What started as a small and frail sapling in June 1948—that is, before independent India was one year old—has grown into a big tree in five decades and is still growing. What is more important, the energy unleashed by this college in Kollam soon gave birth to a chain of Sree Narayana Colleges throughout Kerala.

Thus, thanks to the untiring efforts of the Sree Narayana Dharma Paripalana Yogam, higher education came within the reach of children from the oppressed class. From the darkness of segregation and illiteracy, Kerala entered the light of knowledge for all. I, therefore, bow my head before the memory of this great saint Sree Narayana Guru for his contribution to



Prime Minister Shri Atal Bihari Vajpayee addressing the closing ceremony of the Golden Jubilee of Sree Narayana College, Kollam, 17 January 1999 CC-0. Nanaji Deshmukh Library, BJP, Jammu. Digitized by eGangotri

the social transformation of Kerala and India.

In Sree Narayana Guru, Kerala produced a legend who brought about a revolution of a unique kind—peaceful and one premised on the transformation of man's heart and soul. The teachings were anchored in the ageless spiritual and cultural values of India. Precisely for this reason, his clarion call against social discrimination, One Caste, One Religion, One God for Man had a durable effect and brought about social stability and cohesion at a very critical juncture in our national history.

Unfortunately, these spiritual and social values had been abandoned and transgressed by the very priestly class which was supposed to uphold and propagate them. The oppressive religious orthodoxy divided the Hindu society into many castes and subcastes. Some of the castes that were condemned to the lowest rung of the social hierarchy became not only untouchables but also unapproachable.

Swami Vivekananda who visited Kerala in 1892 had expressed deep displeasure about the prevailing social order.

Today, a hundred years later, the whole world talks of a "Kerala Model" as a tribute to your State's commendable progress in the social sector—in the fields of education, healthcare and women's empowerment. Many noble men and women have contributed to this transformation. Sree Narayana Guru's name will figure high in this list.

It is perhaps not so coincidental that the last idol that Sree Narayana Guru consecrated at the Shivagiri Ashramam was that of Saraswati—the Goddess of learning. Sree Narayana Guru's teachings have a great relevance even today-and not only for the society in Kerala.

Indian society has come a long way from the time when Sree Narayana Guru lived and struggled for social equality and justice. Still we have a long way to go. It is therefore necessary to look at social reformers like him as the guiding light in our march towards a new India—an India of care and compassion for all, and an India of unity and harmony among

all our diverse communities.

Friends, education is the best instrument to rebuild our nation into a new India that we all collectively dream of. Kerala has taken the lead in achieving near-total literacy. It has also established a chain of educational institutions that cater to the needs of all the communities in your state.

Now, looking to the future, your State needs to scale higher levels of achievements in education. I would like to see Kerala to create more and more centres of excellence in education. The centres should attract the best students from not only other parts of India but also all over the world. The next century is going to be knowledge driven. Hence the global demand for high quality education is certain to rise immensely. If India can Create centres of Excellence in scientific, technical, medical, management and humanities education, they will become the preferred campuses for students all over the world. They will also earn valuable foreign exchange for the country.

In many ways Kerala is ideally suited to take this new and ambitious step in the march of education. The matchless natural beauty that Kerala offers is ideal for learning. Your State has a large number of non-residents who have developed valuable expertise in many professions. They also have the financial resource to support such an endeavour. Therefore, the one thought I would like to leave behind on this occasion is that the students, teachers and managements of educational institutions in Kerala must strive hard to improve the standards of education to global levels. My special advise to our young students is just this.

The world tomorrow will offer unlimited opportunities for those who are rich in knowledge and expertise. Therefore, study well, enlarge the horizon of your intellectual quest, be the best in whatever you are doing. By so doing, you will make this college which was set up 50 years ago for the benefit of the backward classes one of the most forward looking educational institutions in India and the world.

#### V Health and Social Welfare

### Rural Development Must for National Development

WE ALL HAVE gathered here for an important conference. It is important, in the first instance, because it is the first meeting of the State Ministers of Rural Development, Rural Housing and Panchayati Raj after my Government took office in New Delhi. Hence, I must, at the very outset, both welcome you to this conference and thank you for giving me this opportunity to meet important representatives of the State Governments.

But a greater reason that lends importance to this conference is its subject. Rural Development, Rural Housing and Panchayati Raj constitute an inter-dependent set of concerns which are at the very heart of India's present and future national development. Precisely because of this reason, they are at the heart of the National Agenda for Governance, which is the blueprint of my Government's policies and priorities.

To explain the importance of rural development in the context of our common dream of building a new India is to belabour the obvious. India is a land of villages. Between 60 and 70 per cent of our population lives in villages and is engaged in agriculture and allied activities. When it is said that India is an ancient nation and this fact makes all of us proud, it is well recognized that what constitutes her rich antiquity is her village-based culture and agriculture.

It is on the solid foundation of this ancient culture that India is emerging as a potentially strong and modern nation. Again, it is on the solid foundation of our agriculture that India is emerging as a potentially strong and modern economy.

I have used the term "potentially" with deliberate intent and emphasis. It points to a historic possibility well within our

Free rendering of the speech in Hindi at the Conference of State Ministers of Rural Development, Rural Housing and Panchayati Raj, New Delhi, 13 May 1998

reach. It also powerfully reminds us that the possibility of India becoming a strong economy and a strong nation depends crucially on the attention we pay to the following levelopment of our villages and our agriculture.

This is where the subject of today's conference assumes its paramount importance. I would even go as far as to say that, both from a short-term and long-term point of view, Ministries of Rural Development, Rural Housing and Panchayati Raj are the most important Ministries in our Union and State Governments.

I wish to underscore this core belief of mine because it goes against conventional wisdom and practice hitherto followed. Rural development is the engine of India's national development. But, until now, what ought to have been at the very vanguard of the train of national progress has been treated as one of the lower-class compartments in it.

For most parts of the post-Independence history, rural development did not figure as a national priority in terms of either financial investments or administrative attention. The result is there for all to see. Our food production has failed to catch up with the growth of our population making food security a critical dimension of our national security. Public investment in agriculture and irrigation is nearly stagnant. Of those living in rural areas, as many as 25 crore live below the poverty line.

We need as many as two crore houses to be built or upgraded in rural areas in order to provide decent habitat to our rural poor. A majority of the houseless or ill-housed people in villages belong to Scheduled Castes, Scheduled Tribes and Other Backward Classes. Deprived of gainful and sustainable employment in the villages of their origin, millions of them migrate to towns and cities each year. There, too, they live a life of deprivation.

Let us look at another face of the contemporary Indian reality. We pride ourselves in being the largest democracy in the world. And rightly so, But Jamhu. bightzet by chargeth of our CC-0. Nanaji Desamukh Library, BJP, Jamhu. bightzet by chargeth of our

democracy at the grassroot-level in our village panchayats? We have to admit that we as a nation have failed to tend the roots. When the roots are not well-nourished, the tree cannot be very healthy.

Thus, we see a cruel paradox. Village India, which has sustained our culture and economy, has been condemned to the clutches of backwardness. I am not here criticizing anybody or any party or any government. Let us admit that this has been our collective failure as a nation. And let us use the recognition of this bitter truth as the basis of a strong national consensus to give the top priority to rural development.

We have stated in the National Agenda that we will give a humane face to the national development efforts with poverty eradication as the ultimate goal and removal of unemployment as the means. We have set for ourselves the goal of *Berozgari Hatao*. And we recognize that to achieve this goal we have to upgrade the attack on unemployment and poverty into a national movement.

Specifically, we are committed to provide drinking water to every village. We are committed to making our country hunger-free in the next 10 years. Towards this end, we will be earmarking 60 per cent of the Plan funds for agriculture, rural development and irrigation. Besides, we have stated that, in our endeavour to facilitate construction of 20 lakh new housing units each year and we will give priority to poor.

These noble goals are shared not only by the parties which are a part of the ruling alliance at the centre. They are equally shared by the opposition parties, which are running some of the State Governments represented in this conference. One only has to see our respective election manifestos or public pronouncements to realize that there already exists a very broad platform of commitment to rural development.

The challenge before all of us before the Union Government and State Governments is this: How shall we transform this collective commitment into visible and tangible results? I would like to utilize today's occasion to present some thoughts for

your consideration.

First of all, we must view rural development in an integral and integrated perspective. I am fully aware that some of the critical areas of rural development such as agriculture, irrigation and finance do not come within the ambit of your ministries. For example, credit policy is the responsibility of the Finance Ministry. But adequate, timely and easily accessible rural credit is an important component of any rural development strategy. Credit is a critical input in meeting the needs of the self-employed and the unincorporated sector. Provision of microfinance to meet the needs of micro-enterprises must receive priority attention.

Similarly, irrigation and watershed management may be part of the activities of other ministries. But it is well-known to all of us that unless we vastly and rapidly increase the cultivable land under irrigation, we can neither achieve the goal of creating a "Hunger-Free India" nor can we bring prosperity to the doorsteps of all the rural homes.

The point I wish to emphasize is this: All wings of the Union and State Governments which have a bearing on rural development must ensure that their policies and programmes complement and supplement each other to give a big boost to rural development. This is very crucial for creating synergy in our investments and activities. When that happens, One plus One will become not Two, but Eleven.

Secondly, we must learn from the experience gained so far by the various State and Central Ministries of Rural Development, Rural Housing and Panchayati Raj and apply bold corrections. For instance, all of us know that financial allocations alone cannot bring the results we seek. There have been financial allocations and substantial allocations at that in the past too. And we do also have a number of programmes, at both Central and State-levels, for rural development and poverty alleviation.

But what has been the outcome of these allocations and programmental themselves allocations are allocations and allocations are allocations are allocations and allocations are allocations are allocations and allocations are allocat

analyzed the impact on the targeted beneficiaries? Have we plugged the leaks and loopholes? No government in the world, however rich, can go on allocating tens of thousands of crores of rupees on rural development, only to find that only about 15 per cent of them get well-spent? This is not my observation, but that of one of my predecessors.

We must change this reality. We must pay far greater attention to effective programme implementation, programme monitoring and programme review. And we must institutionalize this mechanism within our policy and plan formulations, keeping in mind that those who monitor should not be the same ones who spend.

A review of the design of the programmes also seems necessary. It appears to me that there are far too many programmes, with similar or overlapping objectives. This creates avoidable confusion not only at the organizational levels but also among the people who access the services. We should demystify the programmes in concept and content. An expert committee which went into these issues has made many useful recommendations. I am happy to note that the agenda before you includes several changes such as restructuring of the self-employment programmes.

In addition, strengthening of the Panchayati Raj Institutions (PRIs), enhancing transparency and accountability, augmenting public participation, exploring new options in rural housing and implementing integrated watershed development programmes are some of the issues before you. You may deliberate on these issues and advise us since these programmes will be the main instruments for eradication of poverty.

My third point of submission is that our states must learn from each other's successes and failures. And in doing so, we must rise above narrow party affiliations.

I would like to stress the paramount need to broaden and deepen the participation of the co-operative sector, voluntary sector and the local-level private entrepreneurship in all our plans and programmes.

As a matter of fact, much of the progress in agricultural productivity, agro-processing industries, creation of rural infrastructure, development of crafts and artisanry has happened thanks to the people's initiative at the local level. sometimes with governmental support but often without it. If only the Government becomes a little more supportive, our people on their own are capable of achieving wonders.

Lastly, sustained development cannot be achieved through programmes directed from above. Participation of the community is critical. The extent and quality of such participation will determine the success of the programmes. We should act together to realize the potential embedded in the 73rd and 74th Constitution Amendments.

The institution of gram sabha needs to be made into an effective instrument of local self-government for fulfilling the aspirations of the people. That can only come through a movement. Most of the states have taken steps towards decentralization in terms of elections and devolution of resources. I would like others to complete the process at the earliest.

We are happy that we already have 33 lakh elected representatives who are accessible locally. These representatives should be trained adequately to serve as effective instruments of rural development. Let us all strengthen the institutions and systems that promote transparency and effective public participation at every level.

One of the areas that needs urgent attention in empowering Panchayati Raj Institutions is their financial health. Unless we make them financially strong and increasingly capable of selffinancing their basic activities we cannot strengthen democracy at the grassroots.

As you know, my Government has recently constituted a Special Task Force, headed by the Rajasthan Chief Minister, Shri Bhairon Singh Shekhawat to advise us on the devolution of financial and administrative powers from the centre to the states.

I am happy to announce today that the terms of this Task Force will be widened to include recommendations on how to devolve greater financial and administrative powers to the Panchayati Raj Institutions.

The problems are doubtless complex and the challenge is daunting. However, given a firm will and strong commitment on our part, on the part of the states as well as the centre, I am confident that we will be able to put rural development at the cutting edge of India's national development. I wish all success to your conference.

## Spirit of Service Essential in Health Sector

 $T_{\rm HIS}$  IS MY first visit to your beautiful state after my Government assumed office in New Delhi. I am happy that my first official programme itself has an auspicious and humanitarian ring around it.

I am indeed honoured to inaugurate the Amrita Institute of Medical Sciences and Research Centre here in Kochi today. My sense of being honoured is greatly enhanced by the fact that this Institute bears the name of Mata Amritanandamayi Devi.

Speech at the inauguration of Amrita Institute of Medical Sciences and Research Centre, Kochi, 17 May 1998

"Amrita" means that which is deathless. This has been the subject of perennial quest for philosophers and medical practitioners alike. In India, however, our sages evolved a holistic concept of life that erased the boundary of death.

The secret of achieving this was the healthy way of living, with health itself understood in its physical, biological, mental, emotional and spiritual dimensions. Our medical science was evolved on the foundation of this understanding.

Today, more and more thinking people in India and the world over are veering around to this understanding of life and health. This is thanks to the tireless efforts of modern-day sages like Mata Amritanandamayi Devi, who is affectionately called "Amma" by millions of Her devotees.

Her message was bold: She appealed to our technological world to take a 180-degree turn and go within to explore the inner world over the next few years. This can happen only if the new generation becomes convinced that the inner transformation of the individual is the only lasting solution to the modern world's social problems.

The world today needs solid proof that our human values are useful, that such qualities as compassion, selflessness, renunciation and humility have the power to create a great and prosperous society. Amma's work in the field of spiritualism as well as social service provides us with the much-needed proof.

That is why I call this a historic event. She is showing us the value of the right combination of spiritual ideals and practical wisdom.

She has already performed the most intricate heart operation on thousands of young men and women, removing the blockages of indifference and allowing the free flow of love.

She has been able to motivate a young band of educated, professional men and women to work selflessly and with great dedication for the betterment of society, as the path that will lead them towards Self-realization.

In this hospital, we find the best medical facilities available CC-0. Nariaji Deshmukh Library, BJP, Jammu. Digitized by edangorija vailable

anywhere in the world, and a dedicated team of expert doctors from various countries joining hands to keep the hearts of the least among the poor and meek going strong.

Amma is the source of spiritual inspiration and practical guidance for this magnificent project. This multi-speciality hospital is truly the pride of Kerala. It is a tribute to Amma's grand and noble vision.

But it is equally a tribute to the dedication and selfless labour of thousands of people all over the globe who came together to transform a grand vision into a reality. I extend my hearty congratulations to all of them.

For many centuries, India stood as an ideal for the world in material riches, scientific thought, and spiritual values. However, the motivating force for growth today has changed. It is to create maximum material benefit even at the cost of health and human happiness.

Even though many nations are flourishing materially, the quality of life has generally deteriorated. This has happened in India, too. Over the past hundred years, our material comforts may have multiplied a thousand-fold. However, along with this, mental stress and worries have greatly increased.

The health profile of today's India presents a unique paradox. On the one hand, the basic healthcare needs of the majority are generally neglected. Even those diseases that lend themselves to easy preventive cure—such as diarrhoea, blindness, etc—have assumed chronic dimensions. This is especially so in urban slums and rural, hilly, and remote areas.

On the other hand, more and more people among India's rich classes are beginning to suffer from health problems that are similar to those prevailing in the rich nations of the world. In the global consumerist culture we are now living in, every new means to satisfy one desire gives birth to ten new desires.

Our society is required to effectively address the health problems of both varieties at the national, local and personal levels. As far as my Government is concerned, we have stated in the National Agenda for Governance that social infrastructure development will receive a high priority. Healthcare being a vital area of the country's social infrastructure, our policies and programmes will adequately reflect our concern for creating a healthy society.

Today I do not wish to speak in detail about what the Government intends to do in this area. I would, however, like to emphasize that the critical factor that makes a difference between a successful health policy and an unsuccessful one is not financial resources.

It is true that the Government needs to allocate more resources to this sector, especially to strengthening primary and preventive healthcare. But, frankly, the main problem is not money, but management.

Are we using the existing resources most efficiently? Are the results properly monitored? Are the national, state-level, and local-level goals being achieved in the stipulated time? Are periodic corrective measures taken if found necessary? Does our public healthcare system place the patients and the people at the centre of its concerns?

These are the questions I would like our health administrators to constantly ask themselves and find satisfactory answers to them. But these are also the questions that I would like our heatlhcare practitioners in the private sector to address.

We cannot think of the public healthcare system and the private healthcare system to have divergent objectives. The two must supplement and complement each other.

This is where I see a unique model for both the public and private healthcare systems in the hospital project inspired by Her Holiness Amma. What makes this an exemplary model is the missing link of "seva" or the spirit of service.

When all our institutions, including hospitals and primary health centres, begin to work with the spirit of service, India will greatly gain in esteem not only in the eyes of Indians, but also in the eyes of the world. We should, therefore, be grateful to Amma for spreading the message of service.

Amma's emphasis on compassionate service is also visible

in the other scheme which I have the honour of inaugurating. Today the keys to the first 5,000 houses for the homeless are being distributed here and I am sure that Amma will accomplish Her target of 25,000 houses within the next five years.

I am told that all the ashram residents and household devotees of Amma have been actively involved in the construction of these houses for the poor. Their pure love, which is not limited to any particular community or religion, has made these houses into true temples of love.

The most valuable dividend these projects declare is the inner joy and sense of satisfaction shared by everyone associated with them.

Here, again, there is a lesson for us in the Government and in the private sector. My Government has set the goal of facilitating construction of 20 lakh new housing units each year. This, however, is not the responsibility of government agencies alone.

If we work with the sense of dedication and determination that volunteers here have shown in their housing project, I am sure that we will easily reach the ultimate goal of "Housing for All" in the next ten years.

In this, my first official visit to Kerala, I cannot but express my happiness and appreciation at the many marvellous achievements of your state—especially in the fields of health, education, arts and culture.

The entire country should learn from Kerala's outstanding success in eradicating illiteracy, especially female illiteracy, greatly reducing infant mortality, and improving mother and child health.

All this could not have become possible without a long tradition of progressivism and social reform. In the past, the great Masters like Adi Sankaracharya, Chattambi Swami, and Narayana Guru, have sown the seeds of social reformation through spiritual means in this holy land known after Parasurama.

In Amma, we find those seeds sprouting, growing and CC-0. Nanaji Deshmukh Library, BJP, Jammu. Digitized by eGangotri

spreading their branches far and wide aspiring to touch the stars.

The years to come, I believe, will certainly witness a momentous transformation brought about by Amma in the socio-economic scenario of Kerala and perhaps in the whole Nation. That will be the fulfilment of my participation in today's function.

I would like to digress at this point to say something about a matter which has attracted national and international attention. It is a digression and yet closely related to the health, wellbeing and security of the nation.

On May 11 and 13, India conducted five nuclear tests and thereby announced its emergence as a Nuclear Weapons State.

We did so on the basis of our own sound and careful appraisal of the regional and global security scenario.

When India was being surrounded by nuclear weaponry, we could not have allowed the country to be taken by surprise. Besides, India could not have succumbed to pressures to sign discriminatory treaties which had utterly failed to bring about any progress in global nuclear disarmament.

I would like to reassure the international community that the nuclear tests will make no change in India's long and vigorous pursuit of peace in the region and in the world. Ours will never be weapons of aggression.

Our bold action has found support in all sections of the Indian society and polity, reflecting a deep national consensus on this vital issue of national security. It has created an atmosphere of unity and self-confidence from Kerala to Kashmir.

I appeal to all my countrymen to preserve and further strengthen this sense of unity and self-confidence.

Let us all work with redoubled discipline, dedication and patriotism in our respective spheres of life.

In the short run, we should be prepared to face some hardships.

I have no doubt however, that Indiazewill conguirome the

present challenge and emerge as a stronger, more prosperous and more vibrant nation, whose voice will be duly heard in the international arena.

### Economic Empowerment of Women Vital for Development

AM PLEASED to be here with you to inaugurate the ambitious Kudumbashree project. This is a bold experiment in mobilizing people's action for poverty eradication and social justice. It is revolutionary yet peaceful; well planned, yet human; simple in conception, yet powerful in potential.

I congratulate the Government and the people of Kerala for designing a poverty eradication programme with such tremendous potential.

With this new initiative Kerala has given yet another big push to its progressive traditions. Your state has always prided itself in the high quality of life enjoyed by its majority. By focusing on creation of human capital, giving priority to education, health, food security, and social security, Kerala has the best indicators of human development in the country.

With Kudumbashree, your state has begun a novel venture to bring the benefits of social development to the disadvantaged

Speech while inaugurating the Kudumbashree Project, Malappuram, 17 May 1998

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section in society that has still remained poor.

This approach is in keeping with Kerala's traditional success in achieving social development through the process of awareness building, public demand, and government response. However, Kudumbashree goes beyond what has been done before because, for the first time, it makes the members of the scheme, an integral part of it.

Most important of all, you have made women at the local level leaders and implementers of this scheme. Frankly, I cannot think of any such poverty alleviation program in the country, which combines the multiple social objectives of women's empowerment, grassroots participation in a Panchayati Raj framework, neighbourhood networking, democratic accountability, and increasing savings.

I see several opportunities in the Kudumbashree project. The bane of our poverty alleviation programs has been that they are mostly supply-driven, with subsidies being doled out from above without considering local needs and possibilities.

Kudumbashree marks a refreshing change in that it gives primacy to self-help and only an auxiliary role to governmental subsidies. By promoting thrift, it affords opportunities for attractive credit from banks, besides teaching prudence to the poor families.

Group savings and group action can remove the curse of money-lenders. Since the whole system is organized transparently, the thrift and savings groups can become "Informal Banks for the Poor and of the Poor".

Kudumbashree has a great advantage due to its focus on women. Poor women are the best savers and the most careful spenders. They do not borrow indiscriminately and become heavily indebted. They are very keen to repay loans promptly, particularly when the entire group is involved. This will set a new pattern of credit flow to the rural poor.

Contrast this with the practice of hig borrowers who CC-0. Nanaji Deshmukh Library, BJP, Jammu. Digitized by eGangoin who

together owe as much as Rs. 45,000 crore to the banks. Our entire banking system is under pressure because of these Non-Performing Assets (NPAs). My government is seriously considering effective steps to recover these bad debts. I only hope that the big borrowers learn from our poor village women the *dharma* of repaying loans.

Group action by women will facilitate planning from below. The people's groups serve as watchdog to keep track of public spending. Their growth is restricted only by the innovations that the groups are capable of coming up with.

I don't see this as a mere inauguration of a governmental programme. I see it as the launching of a social movement for change, capable of becoming a sustainable and irresistible force for liberation and progress.

I exhort the women's groups to be active and alert; to eschew conflicts; to be prudent in borrowing and intelligent in investing; and to acquire skills and grow in confidence. These organizations should strive to recreate the traditional village harmony, even while achieving progress and strive to attain Gandhiji's vision of Swaraj.

If only our governments can design and implement more such schemes, we will be able to remove the cynicism in people's minds and restore their faith in our institutions.

It is in the fitness of things that this state-wide program is being inaugurated in the district of Malappuram which is one of the backward districts of Kerala. I understand that there has been a pilot project for some time and that the lessons learnt have been incorporated into the state-wide Kudumbashree programme.

Dear Friends, different states have many impressive programs for poverty alleviation and rural development. The examples of Janmabhoomi in Andhra Pradesh, Antyodaya in Rajasthan, Gokul Gram in Gujarat, the Employment Guarantee Scheme in Maharashtra, and others are before us.

They each have a unique approach to solving the specific problems of their areas. This is genuine decentralization of developmental action. My Government shall fully back all such programs. We will also encourage the states to learn from each other, so that we eradicate poverty quickly.

While I wholeheartedly congratulate the Government of Kerala for this model scheme, permit me to point out a few problems that all poverty alleviation programs are facing in the country.

The low growth in industrial and agricultural sectors and the growing unemployment have created a strain on the government in its efforts to maintain the social infrastructure that has been created. Rural infrastructure has been especially neglected.

Without a strong infrastructure, it is difficult to support and sustain primary, secondary, and tertiary income generation activities. But infrastructure improvement needs resources. Generating these resources is not easy.

This is a challenge that India needs to face squarely—both at the Central and State levels. Old ways of thought and action, however, have crippled our country's capacity to fully harness the financial, administrative, and societal resources already available with us.

I strongly urge that our society moves away from the culture of rights and demands to a new culture of responsibilities.

I also hope that our administration has a people-centric and service-oriented way of functioning, in which good performance is rewarded and bad performance is not tolerated.

About finances, let us learn to make the most efficient use of what we have, instead of thinking that better results are possible only with additional resources.

In this context, I am glad to know that Kerala has launched a massive decentralization drive to break this impasse. Effective

decentralization will meet the challenges of development. I am sure the unique People's Planning Campaign in your state has addressed this issue.

Increase in agricultural production and productivity by better use of local resources, halting environmental degradation through local action, improvement in delivery of services through local control, and higher investment in priority areas through reduced leakages and the mobilization of local resources are the fruits of decentralization.

Decentralization transfers power to the people. It enlarges democracy by increasing the participation of the people. The panchayat and urban local bodies should be seen as conduits for power to flow to the ordinary people. They should not be seen as power centres but as trustees of the people; as agencies of public service; and, as instruments of face-to-face democracy.

For decentralization to be effective, it has to be free from corruption, nepotism, and patronage. This can be done only if there is scope for genuine people's participation. Control from below is the best check against possible abuse of power by local authorities.

The word "participation" is often used very loosely. One has to be very clear about what it means. There can be pseudoparticipation where people are got together only for the sake of official record. There can be manipulative participation where people are collected for attainment of ulterior motives.

Genuine participation involves not merely giving a "voice", or the freedom to air opinions, grievances, and demands. It involves the "power" of choice that means people's right to decide what they want, and their right to monitor the functioning of the Government.

The Grama Sabha, where all the electors get together becomes a critical institution of democratic decentralization. However, there is a danger of the Grama Sabha degenerating into a body of approvers or an amorphous group of applicants.

Organizing women is one of the best ways of avoiding this CC-0. Nanaji Deshmukh Library, BJP, Jammu. Digitized by eGangotri

danger. Hence, I see Kudumbashree as a furthering of the decentralization process and as a tool for empowerment of the poor.

Dear Friends, the whole nation is watching this program with interest. I assure my personal support and the support of the government in New Delhi to the success of this project and its possible replication elsewhere. In matters relating to the nation's development and people's welfare, there should be no place for party politics.

I believe that the lamp I have lit today is symbolic of the transition from the benighted world of dependence to the enlightened world of empowerment and freedom, freedom from the darkness of poverty to the light of prosperity.

I wish Kudumbashree all success and hope that it will open new frontiers of community action.

### Government Should Facilitate Rehabilitation of Mentally Challenged Persons

CONSIDER IT a privilege to be present on this important occasion. And I am not saying this in a manner of formality.

As Prime Minister of the country, I am invited to attend many functions and inaugurate many programmes. Each one

Speech at the inauguration of the National Pilot Project for Early Intervention to Prepare the Mentally Challenged Persons to Integrate with Family and Community, New Delhi, 29 June 1998

of them is significant in its own way, having a bearing on the social and economic development of our country.

But some programmes carry a greater emotional content in them and give a deeper sense of personal satisfaction. This is because, any degree of success in these programmes directly transforms itself into smile on a child's face, happiness in a suffering family and a sense of accomplishment in the community.

Today's programme is one of them. As I inaugurate the National Pilot Project for Early Intervention to Prepare the Mentally Challenged Persons to Integrate with Family and Community, my heart is filled with a gratifying belief. It is the belief that here is a good deed—a *satkarma*—where the Government can indeed show that it has the ability to make a difference in the lives of the most neglected and marginalized section of our society.

Independent India has seen many distortions in the development process resulting in different kinds of inequalities in our society. These inequalities have pushed the poor and several other sections of our population to the margins of our national life.

But when we look at the mentally challenged persons in our midst and I am using the term mentally challenged deliberately, as a more suitable substitute to the description "mentally retarded", we find that they live on the margins of every section of society including those that are themselves marginalized.

Barring happy exceptions, mentally challenged persons live a life of exclusion as much in a rich community as in a poor community. With exclusion comes apathy and indifference and even callousness. This deepens the distress of those suffering from developmental disabilities.

Here I would like to draw attention to an important difference between the treatment a mentally challenged persons receives within their family and the community. Family is still a strong institution in India, even though it is coming under many negative pressures, especially in cities and towns. Values such as love and care are still fairly deep-rooted in the family structure. Hence, mentally challenged persons receive affection and assistance in many families. But the same cannot be said about the community.

The rapid erosion of a sense of caring and empathy in our community life is the most painful feature of contemporary social life in India. This lack of caring and sensitivity manifests itself most starkly in the treatment given to disabled people as a whole and to the mentally challenged persons in particular.

I am happy, therefore, to note that the National Pilot Project aims at integration of mentally challenged persons not only with family but also with community. It is especially heartening to know that the project has emphasized early intervention strategies. As in other areas of health care, here too a preventive approach is far more fruitful than cure and costly treatment at a later stage.

I congratulate all those in the Ministry of Social Justice and Empowerment who have played a role in designing this worthy project. While wishing them well, let me say that the entire country keenly awaits the positive outcome of this project.

I have reason to believe that the Pilot Project will give a good account of itself. This is because the Ministry has made voluntary and research organizations an integral part of this national effort. It has based the project on the pioneering work done in this sphere by CIMR, Kerala. This NGO has a remarkable performance to its credit through its grassroot activities in the six states of Delhi, Madhya Pradesh, Andhra Pradesh, Karnataka, Tamil Nadu and Kerala.

Similarly, the National Institute of Mentally Handicapped, Secunderabad, is doing excellent work in research, training and providing extension services to the mentally challenged.

Let us give the researchers and volunteers of these organizations a big hand. The Ministry of Social Justice and Empowerment has finalized the proposal to set up a 'National Trust for the Welfare of the Mentally Challenged and Persons

with Cerebral Palsy and Autism'. This Trust would also manage properties bequeathed to it by the families of the mentally challenged. I urge the Ministry to put this noble idea into action at the earliest.

On this occasion, may I offer some suggestions and thoughts for the implementation of the Pilot Project, as also for the broader approach towards the issue of mental health and developmental disabilites? I am not an expert, but as someone who has seen life long enough from different angles, I think I can offer some useful ideas.

First of all, mental and developmental disability is an issue where we in Government simply cannot take a bureaucratic approach. Integration and rehabilitation of mentally challenged persons is basically a societal task. Government should act to facilitate what is essentially a community effort.

This is all the more self-evident, considering the fact that despite the best efforts of Government so far, it has been able to reach out to only a small percentage of the physically and mentally disabled population of our country. In other words, all those in Government who are associated with this effort, should display the same sense of psychological, emotional, intellectual and spiritual involvement in the work as shown by the dedicated grassroot volunteers.

Secondly, in your sensitization campaign, you must especially stress the all-important role of parents in understanding and practising early intervention methods. Very often, parental ignorance plays a major role in the worsening of a developmental problem that could otherwise have been contained at a manageable level.

Thirdly, there should be a major focus on our national effort to reach out to women suffering from developmental disabilities. Such women are the worst victims of community exclusion. In the case of disabled girls and women, the very fact of being a woman constitutes a further social disadvantage.

Fourthly, nothing provides greater strength to a family having a mentally challenged person than religious and cultural

resources. For the integration of such persons in community too, religion and culture can play an important role. I would, therefore, urge you to make religious and cultural establishments active partners in this national campaign to enable mentally challenged persons live a life of dignity in society.

Lastly, we should involve organizations in the fields of television, press, films, music, sports, literature, arts and philanthropy fully in this endeavour. A collaborative effort linking Government and NGOs and these organizations alone can create a positive and sensitive social environment for people suffering from developmental disabilities.

Integration is, after all, a matter of attitude. And it is the attitudes in society towards mentally challenged persons that must change.

My appeal to you on this occasion is just this: Let us embark on a truly national effort to prove to ourselves that mentally challenged persons are an integral part of our families, our communities and our nation. Let us prove to ourselves that we care for them and that we will do everything for their rehabilitation and well-being.

With these words, I formally inaugurate this great National Pilot Project and wish it every success.

### Integrate Traditional and Modern Healthcare Systems

I AM INDEED happy to be present here and to share in the joy and a sense of accomplishment of the students who have graduated today. I extend my felicitations to all the recipients of the degrees, awards and medals, and offer my best wishes to you all for a most satisfying career of service.

I am confident that the knowledge and expertise acquired by you at this premier medical institution in India will stand you in good stead in making a success of your career. At the same time, I am sure you will carry with you the fundamental values of commitment, pursuit of excellence and a sense of enjoyment in work, which this institution has imparted you.

Visiting AIIMS is a pleasure re-doubled for me when I recall my own association with this Institute. It is here that I spent eight long months as a patient and prisoner during the Emergency. I must record here with gratitude that the doctors and nurses of AIIMS, and especially members of the Class IV staff, took very good care of me.

The memory of life in detention always has a ring of sadness and struggle. But if one has to spend the time of detention in a hospital, then a new dimension gets added to this struggle—the struggle with one's own body. And this makes the memory even more permanent. Because of the association with the Emergency, whenever I think of AIIMS I naturally think of the health of the nation as a whole.

I have always believed that health is a holistic concept. There is a close co-relationship between the health of a nation and the health of its people. Here I am referring not only to the physical parameters of health, but also to the mental,

Convocation address at the All India Institute of Medical Sciences, New Delhi, 24 July 1998 psychological and spiritual well-being of the citizens. If the general health profile of the citizenry is sound, the nation itself becomes vibrant and dynamic. Similarly, if the institutions of a nation are strong and healthy, they contribute to the overall well-being of the people.

That is why, it is high time we looked at health issues in an integral manner. I am not saying that politicians and doctors should or can interchange their roles. Politics and medicine are two separate spheres of activity, each with its own set of concerns and operational context.

Yet, what is generally not recognized is their interrelationship. This, in spite of the fact that every undergraduate medical student is taught in his preventive and social medicine class the great axiom which tells us that "Medicine is a social science and politics is medicine on a large scale."

This insightful teaching from medical education carries immense significance for politicians. But there is also another concept from the field of medicine—the concept of self-healing—which is equally valid in society and politics. The architecture of the human body-mind-soul structure is such that it has a tremendous power of self-healing. Indeed, as many of you will agree, the best doctor is one who helps and accelerates the body's own self-healing process.

Similarly, in the field of politics and governance, the best leadership is one that helps society discover its own power of self-correction and rejuvenation. Today Indian society is beset with a number of problems, and they are all too well known to bear any description here. The real question is: What is the solution to these problems?

The very first step in finding the right solutions is to recognize that there cannot be any quick-fix solutions, much less solutions offered or taken from foreign sources. India must find her own answers to the problems she is facing—learning, of course, from the experiences of other nations.

The role of social and political leadership in this process is

to strengthen the institutions of society—which are, indeed, the limbs and parts of the Body of the Nation. There is an urgent need to strengthen our institutions and systems in Parliament, administration, judiciary, economy, culture, media, education and, of course, healthcare. India will be able to overcome the current crises on different fronts only if we revitalize our institutions in every field and at every level, making them effective agents of democratic self-correction in society.

On the occasion of the convocation of AIIMS, the question I would like all of you to ponder over is: How can India strengthen her institutions in the field of education and healthcare? Yours is not only the country's most prestigious teaching institution in medicine, but also the best-known hospital. Hence, the faculty, staff and students of AIIMS have a special responsibility to set standards of excellence in all areas of medical studies and service.

It is perhaps a cliche to call the medical profession the noblest and most coveted one. But I know of no other profession which celebrates and reveres human life the way the medical profession does. Unfortunately, the system of healthcare that has evolved over the years in India does not adequately respect human life.

Our record in healthcare is far from edifying. While old problems are a continuing menace, several new ones have appeared on the scene. Malaria, tuberculosis, diarrhoeal diseases and respiratory tract infections are still afflicting millions. New infections like HIV/AIDS are threatening to take epidemic proportions.

A large segment of India's population is still struggling with the problems of inadequate nutrition and unhygienic living conditions. Severe malnutrition is on the decline, but stunting and low birth weight remain difficult conditions to grapple with. Infant mortality rate has come down but a high new-born mortality is posing a formidable challenge. As you know, the World Health Organization has declared 1998 as the Year of Safe Motherhood. But our national record in maternal mortality is far lower than that of many developing countries.

In the year since India's Independence, breath-taking advances have taken place in medicine, and many of these advances can be seen in well-endowed hospitals in our own country. But how much of this progress is available and affordable to the vast masses of our population? A more fundamental question before the Government and health professional is this: Is it at all possible to universalize the high-cost, hospital-based healthcare approach in Indian conditions to cover the entire population? And can India afford to have a medical education system that is based almost exclusively on this approach?

I urge the young medical graduates who are ready to embark on their professional careers to think seriously about this grim reality and work for its redressal in your own small ways. What India needs today is nothing short of a radical reform in both healthcare and medical education systems. I recognize that this is primarily the responsibility of the Government and of those who are managing the healthcare system and medical education in the public and private sectors. My Government will not be found wanting in backing up this reform process with the requisite political will.

In this endeavour to push medical reforms in India, I would like to offer here a few thoughts:

One, India has built a mammoth infrastructure for health-care over the past five decades. While the Government's effort to strengthen it will go on, the real challenge for health administrators and doctors is to is to maximize the efficiency of the existing infrastructure and facilities. We need to earn the faith of the people in our public healthcare system at all levels, from the primary health centre to the tertiary care hospitals, and from outreach activities to post-operative care. In order to make quality healthcare affordable to the common people, we should not hesitate to devise unconventional ways to create synergies between the public and the private healthcare systems.

Two, even as excellence in healthcare at affordable costs remains our primary commitment, research too must proceed CC-0. Nanaji Deshmukh Library, BJP, Jammu. Digitized by eGangotri

apace to serve this objective. India is proud to have a large workforce of technically skilled physicians and has a sound medical research base. Indian scientists have always delivered whenever the country assigned them a mission. We have seen this in the spheres of agricultural science, space science and nuclear science. Why shouldn't therefore, the body of health researchers address prioritised health problems of the country with a mission-oriented approach?

Three, in seeking solutions to India's healthcare problems, please strive for synergy between your training in modern medicine and the rich traditions of healing in the Indian systems of medicine. From the dawn of civilization, India has had an enviable tradition in medicine. I would like to illustrate this with the famous tale of Jivaka in Ayurveda.

Jivaka was asked by his teacher to take a spade and seek round about Taxila one *yojana* on every side and to bring to him any plant which in his opinion was not medicinal. After a good deal of botanical investigation, Jivaka could not discover any plant that was devoid of medicinal properties. The teacher was satisfied and certified him to become a practitioner of Ayurveda. Considering the keen global race to patent medicinal plants these days, we cannot but salute Jivaka and his teacher for the useful knowledge they had acquired thousands of years ago.

Ayurveda, the science of life, was conceived by the legendary Lord Dhanvantri. Charak and Sushruta created encyclopedia works, the "Samhitas", on medicine and surgery, respectively, one thousand years before Christ. Later, this heritage was enriched by the Unani, the allopathic and the homeopathic systems. Indian systems of medicine are in many ways relevant even today and indeed they offer solutions which are more suited to our conditions.

As leaders in health research, AIIMS must take the initiative in forging strong links of collaboration to identify and evaluate the useful and widely applicable elements of traditional systems. At a broader level, we should undertake a rapid programme of

suitable integration of modern and traditional systems of healthcare in our medical education system.

Four, the single-most important developmental problem facing India is the ever-increasing population. It is affecting every dimension of our national life—environment, education, employment, health, economic development, social tranquility, and so on. The gains of socio-economic development have been severely diluted due to the population explosion.

The Government has recently taken the reproductive health approach to population control. The reproductive and Child Health Programme launched last year combines population control activities with a holistic approach to maternal and child health. It lays emphasis on emergency obstetric care, essential newborn care and management of reproductive tract infections. Let us all put our energies together to make this programme a visible success.

Five, the causes of many of the old as well as new public health challenges such as heart diseases, cancer, mental illness and AIDS are rooted in changing lifestyle habits. The forces of urbanization, industrialization and globalization are forcing these lifestyle changes without either the individual or the society being ready to ward off their ill effects. Promoting healthy habits from childhood onward has, therefore, become a national imperative.

Our traditional lifestyle has always emphasized simple and healthy diets, adequate physical exercise, mental peace through meditation and yoga as well as avoidance of addictions. We need to preserve our tradition even as we progress on the path of development so that we can reap the rewards without paying the heavy penalties.

Six, I am very glad to see that many nursing students have received their degrees today. Also, it is heartening to see our nursing colleagues in the audience in large numbers. I hold the nursing profession in very high esteem. I compliment their dedication to a very demanding profession from which the

patients expect compassion and skills of the highest order.

I understand that the number of nurses in the country is much less than the doctors, whereas it should be the other way round. This anomalous situation should be corrected. Augmenting the nursing personnel would not only provide the much-needed partners in the healthcare team, but also help provide employment to women, both in the Government and the private sectors.

Before I conclude, let me once again congratulate you all for your zeal, commitment and hard work. The image of AIIMS as a world-class institution has been built over decades. I call upon all of you, the faculty, the staff and the students to preserve and protect this image, and, indeed, forge ahead in an even higher orbit of excellence.

For all of you who have received their degrees today, this is not the end of medical education, but only a new beginning. As good citizens of the country, you have chosen to serve humanity, to alleviate the pain and suffering of your fellow men. I wish you all the very best in life.

#### Benefits of Modern Medical Technology should Reach the Poorest

I AM PLEASED to be amongst you at the 20<sup>th</sup> International Congress on Radiology. India is privileged to hold this Congress for the first time.

The topic chosen by you "Imaging in the Third Millennium" is very ambitious. As we enter the next millennium, we need to reflect how our undoubted advances in medical technology, not least in radiology, will contribute to the global goal of "Health for All."

Radiology is one of the younger medical sciences; x-rays were discovered just over a hundred years ago. Since then, there has been a tremendous increase in the machines and techniques that tell a doctor whether or not someone is ill; and, if so, what ails him.

Imaging is one of the most fascinating scientific advances in this century. Scanning technology has made it possible for us to see the picture of our internal body systems in amazing detail.

On the other hand, satellite imagery has made it possible for us to see the picture of the earth's surface as well as its inner layers. In short, science has begun to see what the individual eye cannot see.

But what is science, if not the collective eye of the human race? Hence, I make bold to say that "Imaging in the Third Millennium" would have advanced so much that this collective eye of the human race would see things in man's inner and outer space that no poet and no science-fiction writer can today imagine.

Speech while inaugurating the 20th International Congress on Radiology, New Delhi, 18 September 1998

I am happy to note that India is making rapid strides in imaging sciences. Equipment like CAT scans, MRIs, gamma knives, and other sophisticated items are being designed and built and used in hospitals in India. New speciality areas like neuroradiology are coming up, entirely due to the advances in imaging.

I am sure that in the next few years, even newer techniques, technologies, and equipment will be available to let all of you come up with better diagnoses of patients. Such diagnoses that will tell doctors about potential diseases earlier, so that they can treat them better.

I am sure that this will help increase the disease-fighting ability of our doctors, and ensure better health care, for those who can afford it.

This brings me to the main point of my speech. All these high-technology gadgets that we have are also expensive ones. The rich can afford them, but the poor just cannot. This is not just a problem in India or even in South Asia, it is a problem all across the world—including the rich countries of the West. How can we ensure that the increasing benefits of imaging are available to all sections of the population and in all parts of the world?

This is a difficult question. After all, these machines are costly to develop and build. The inputs are also expensive. The radiologists that understand their reports are also specialists whose services do not come cheap. The net result is that most of modern imaging is unaffordable to many persons, especially in poorer countries like India.

I would like the participants of this conference to debate not only the new techniques and technologies, but also the question of increasing their affordability.

In this context, I urge better global cooperation among doctors, governments, financing agencies, and the companies that make these imaging machines. There should be a collective effort to lower the cost of installing and running these machines.

We need to have a proper training system that updates doctors—both radiologists and general practitioners on the rapidly changing techniques and technologies in imaging. This could be done through a network of workshops and conferences. To be more effective, such a network should use the recent advances in communication like the Internet and videoconferencing to disseminate information rapidly and cheaply.

Tele-radiology will make it possible to analyze images that have been transmitted electronically from remote corners of the country, to a place where there are experts. They can then render advice so that the patients in such areas could also benefit from the latest developments in radiology and get appropriate treatment.

While radiology has a lot of benefits, there are also side effects due to prolonged radiation exposure. I am sure you will be addressing this issue as well so that optimum results are obtained with the least possible dose to minimize any potential harmful effects.

Health, however, is not a function of machines only. If one considers health in its broadest sense, it comprises a healthy environment, a healthy economy, healthy institutions of governance, and a healthy society. Only then will all of us enjoy physical and spiritual health. However, to achieve this requires the effort of not just medical practitioners, but also the cooperation of business groups, governments, and socio-cultural organizations, including political parties. It is high time that we placed holistic health high on the global agenda.

I am pleased to say though, that healthcare is one area where there is global cooperation to solve global problems. This occurs both through institutions like the World Health Organization and through continuous seminars and conferences on many subjects, including the one today. You health specialists are thus setting a model for other collective human endeavours like scientific research, economic cooperation, global security and the like.

With these few words, I am happy to inaugurate the 20th International Congress on Radiology.

## Striving to Promote Gandhian Values

I AM PLEASED to be in your midst to give away the Jamnalal Bajaj Awards for the year 1997. I join all of you in extending my hearty felicitations to all the distinguished and deserving winners of these prestigious Awards.

In the history of Indian entrepreneurship, there are many industrial houses that have earned a name for themselves for their outstanding success in business. But there are not many that, apart from being successful, can also claim a close association with the national cause right from the time of the Freedom Struggle. The Bajaj family is one of them.

Jamnalal Bajaj, in whose name the Awards have been founded, was a man of many facets. He was rich—but he also had wealth of a different kind. The inner wealth of a caring and patriotic person which gives itself away in the service of his Motherland and all his countrymen.

Jamnalal Bajaj, a true follower of Gandhiji, took an active part in the Non-Cooperation Movement, the Salt Satyagraha and other activities in the freedom struggle. But his involvement was the closest in the Constructive Programme, which was also the cornerstone of the Mahatma's vision of Swaraj.

What an amazing leader Gandhiji was. Here was a frail

Speech while presenting the Jamnalal Bajaj Awards, Mumbai, 6 November 1998

and aging man who was leading the liberation struggle of a big nation against the mightiest empire of the day, and yet he had the time for guiding thousands of dedicated workers in rural development, hygiene and sanitation, naturopathy, leprosy cure, Nayi Taleem, women's education, harijan welfare, and a dozen other concerns.

One of his many concerns was remodelling business and industry on the principle of trusteeship. He argued that businessmen, and wealthy people in general, should hold their wealth not as belonging to themselves, but as trustees of the people.

Gandhiji's concept of Swaraj did not limit itself to political freedom and not even to a formal framework of elective democracy. It envisioned the reconstruction of every aspect of India's national life based on our own ethos and civilizational values.

In this endeavour, Gandhiji did not advocate isolationism. He welcomed good ideas from all directions. He insisted, however, that India must create her own developmental model suited to meeting our needs and fully harnessing our own material, cultural and human resources.

Moreover, he favoured a developmental model that other countries, even those from the West, could profit from. As he wrote in *Young India* as far back as June 1924,

"My Swaraj is to keep intact the genius of our civilization. I want to write many new things but they must all be written on the Indian slate. I would gladly borrow from the West when I can return the amount with decent interest."

One of the many unique things that Gandhiji wrote on the slate of India's freedom movement was the constructive social programme. He understood long ago that it is neither possible nor desirable for the government machinery to carry the entire burden of social development. Citizens and citizen organizations must become active at the grassroots to improve education, health, and community services.

In other words, citizens have not only rights guaranteed by the Constitution, but also responsibilities enjoined by culture and conscience.

Making the constructive social programme an integral part of the Freedom Movement served another purpose. The tens of thousands of activists who took part in the movement also participated in some or the other constructive activity such as running a khadi centre, or a village school or the campaign against untouchability.

Naturally, such activists turned out to men and women of high idealism, integrity and social concern.

After five decades of freedom, we now know how farsighted Gandhiji was. One of the major failures of independent India has been the widening gulf between politics and the constructive social programme. Our political parties pay a lot of attention to *Sanghatan* (organization) and *Sangharsh* (struggle), but they have ignored *Samrachana* (constructive work).

I am not singling out any single party for this; it is a collective failure of the entire political system.

Those who enter politics today have, by and large, either no grounding in social work or, if they do, it carries only a minor and derivative importance for them. Even such social work that political activists engage in, they generally do so with an eye on elections and power. We all know what kind of tensions and divisions this generates in society.

In spite of all this, there is still a vast army of people in this country who are devoted to genuine social work. Mostly they are unknown (except in their own little circles), unsung and un-honoured, doing their own quiet work in extremely trying conditions. They are the real heroes of our national reconstruction.

It is both appropriate and highly necessary that our society recognizes and honours such heroes. I say so for two reasons. Firstly, it helps correct a grave distortion that has taken place in public consciousness. Today, politicians and businessmen and celebrities from the field of entertainment get so much attention in the mass media that it is often disproportionate to their real contribution to the well-being of society.

Secondly, by honouring more and more real-achievers in the fields of education, healthcare, appropriate technology, and women and child welfare, we help create new role models in society who can inspire others—especially the younger generation.

It, of course, true that the voluntary sector in India today is beset with many of the same problems which afflict other spheres of national life. Excessive dependence on foreign aid, non-transparent and bureaucratic functioning, tug-of-war among NGOs—these are some of the problems we see today.

Therefore, just as political activists need to inculcate the spirit of constructive social work, voluntary agencies also need to immunize themselves against the ills plaguing the political sphere. I urge voluntary organizations to introspect on this score and to take necessary corrective measures.

Before I conclude, I commend the Jamnalal Bajaj Foundation for the excellent work it is doing to promote Gandhian social work in today's conditions. It is heartening that the Foundation has been honouring outstanding individuals from the field of constructive social work, application of science and technology for rural development, and women and child welfare.

I am equally happy to note that the Foundation has instituted an international award given every year to foreigners for their contribution to promotion of Gandhian values outside India.

I urge business houses to get actively involved in the promotion of people's voluntary effort in health, education, rural development and other areas of the social sector. One way of doing it would be to honour and encourage more and

more activists in this field.

I warmly congratulate the four award-winners for 1997—Shri R.K. Patil, Prof. S.S. Katagihallimath, Vinobaniketan, and our friend from Korea, Dr. Young Seek Choue. I wish them success in their future endeavours.

## Barrier-free Environment for the Disabled

I AM EXTREMELY happy to be here with all of you at the International Day of the Disabled Persons. This occasion signifies the triumph of the human spirit and India joins all other nations in saluting it. I extend my hearty congratulations and greetings to the winners of the National Awards for the Welfare of People with Disabilities this year.

These National Awards recognize the outstanding achievements of these persons with different abilities. They symbolize that disability is no impediment to attaining excellence and that disabled people are second to none in any activity.

I would like to felicitate the awardees in all categories, especially the disabled persons whose unflinching dedication and courage have been recognized through this Award. Equally important are the institutions and individuals that have helped bring persons with disabilities into the mainstream.

I am pleased to see in this Hall so many award winners and other dedicated persons who are themselves disabled or

Speech at the presentation of National Awards for the Welfare of the People with Disabilities, New Delhi, 3 December 1998

working for the cause of the disabled. Each of them has carved a niche for themselves in their respective fields.

India's history has had many people with outstanding abilities who transcended their physical limitations. The philosophy of Sage Ashtavakara; the bravery of Rana Sanga; the poetry of Surdas are a cherished part of our heritage. Such people have been the torchbearers of our society, shedding light and bringing hope and courage to millions of people. Today, too, there are many talented persons in music, dance, painting, literature, who have surmounted physical challenges to achieve their goal. For example, the artists so dedicatedly paint using only their foot and mouth, and create such wondrous pictures. Ved Mehta, one of our foremost writers cannot see.

The National Award Day is an appropriate occasion for introspection and future planning. The task before us is challenging. We need to prevent disability. We also need to train and rehabilitate disabled people through education, training, and productive employment.

Prevention and early detection of disability needs good health services. Nutrition, family planning, and immunization programs like the pulse polio have to be strengthened. In this connection, I am happy to announce that the National Pilot Project for Early Intervention to Prepare the Mentally Challenged Persons to Integrate with Family and Community that I had inaugurated in June this year, is being extended to cover one lakh children.

We can take the help of technological progress for the disabled persons. There are aids and appliances to facilitate communication and mobility. The development and manufacture of artificial limbs is yet another important advancement.

I would like that the price of all such aids and appliances is reduced through appropriate social and Government intervention, so that even the poorest person can use these devices, and improve the quality of his life.

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The physical environment in which the disabled live and work has to improve. Facilitating access to building and public transport can go a long way to easing the difficulties which disabled persons encounter. Constructing ramps, modifying transport, etc. will help create a barrier-free environment for the disabled. Such efforts would give greater autonomy to the disabled.

Society owes this much to our disabled citizens as, often, it is the socio-economic conditions that have created the disability. We must use the many scientists, engineers, and technicians, both in the Government and in the private sector to research and develop techniques and products that will benefit the disabled.

The social sector has, so far, been the responsibility of the government. Liberalization is now transferring more responsibility on the private sector. The Government and the non-government sectors have to work together, especially in the social sector.

Laws have to be changed to facilitate the disabled. Society's attitude too must change from pity to active compassion. Only then can the disabled get their rightful share of all benefits that society can offer. Healthcare, education, and employment are the critical areas where the disabled need greatest support.

They also need social rehabilitation, both within their families and in their neighbourhoods. There are rigidities in the system because of which the disabled are not able to use even the facilities that the law provides; there are few facilities that will help them even cast their vote. These legal, administrative, and physical barriers must be removed.

The Government, NGOs, and professionals have to get together and identify how to provide these critical services to the disabled, especially for disabled women in rural and farflung areas, who are the worst sufferers. We must pay extra attention to the North-Eastern States and to Jammu and Kashmir.

I again applaud today's awardees for doing so well in their chosen fields, despite several odds. Their success is due not just to their indomitable spirit, but also to the unstinted support of their family and community, which needs to be acknowledged. India has to work tirelessly to create a society where the disabled are fully integrated in the daily lives, and in the hearts and minds of all of us. They too are a part of our precious human resources, and they too can and must contribute equally in nation-building.

### HIV/AIDS: A Serious Public Health Challenge

SINCE INDEPENDENCE, INDIA has acquired considerable experience in prevention and control of both communicable and non-communicable diseases. While we could successfully eradicate many deadly diseases like Smallpox and Guinea worm and are on the verge of eliminating Leprosy, we are now facing the problem of resurgence of serious communicable diseases like Malaria and Tuberculosis.

While we thought that we had eradicated Malaria from the country, it has now come back in a highly virulent form of Malaria Falciparum that is almost fatal. So far as TB is concerned, roughly about fifteen million Indians are infected with the disease and every year more than 1.2 million are getting added. Hundreds of thousands die of TB each year.

However, the most serious public health challenge that the country is facing today is of HIV/AIDS that is just a decade

old in this country. AIDS is a global problem—sadly, with a strong Indian dimension.

More than twenty out of hundred adults in Africa face death in the next ten years. In one African country, population growth will halt in the next four years. In another African country, life expectancy will drop from a high of 61 years in 1990 to only 41 years next year. What is happening?

What is happening is being compared by senior United Nations public health officials to the bubonic plague that wiped out one-third of Europe's population in the 14th century. According to the South African Government, fourteen per cent of their population of 32 million is infected with HIV, which leads to AIDS and death, and 1,500 more are daily diagnosed with the virus. President Nelson Mandela has, earlier this month, said, "Although AIDS has been a part of our lives for fifteen years or more we have kept silent about its true presence in our midst", adding, "We have too often spoken of it as someone else's problem." That is South Africa's situation and there is President Mandela's recent statement.

I have taken the liberty of referring to Africa and quoting President Mandela because our situation is also alarming, and could become frightening, and we too speak of AIDS as someone else's problem.

Look at our own AIDS situation. The Health Ministry puts the figure of HIV infections in the country as of now at three million to four million. In some states, the infection rate is one per cent of the population. Since we have these three to four million infections today from a base of just a few infections in 1986, imagine what the scene will be like in another twelve years from the base now of three million to four million. I shudder even to contemplate the numbers. And mind you, currently there is no cure for HIV/AIDS.

Because HIV afflictions take till ten years in healthy circumstances to blow into AIDS and AIDS patients live till two more years, people do not take the virus seriously. In unhealthy conditions, the timeframe is much shorter.

Another reason why people do not take AIDS seriously is because it is diabolical; one comes to know one is HIV positive only if one goes and takes an HIV test, the Elisa test. In absence of the Elisa test, one could be carrying the virus for six or seven years not knowing about it and passing it on to one's spouse and the wife to the newborn through breast-feeding, without any of them knowing. This is the crux of the problem. However, these are just figures and figures do not convey the human tragedy that is taking place in many parts of the country today.

A man or a woman has diarrhoea or fever or weakness that medicines fail to subdue. He or she goes to a doctor. The doctor suggests a blood test. The person tests HIV positive. The test is repeated. The HIV infection is confirmed. However, it is too late. The person's partner is already infected and the couple's child is also infected from breast feeding. The first infection is almost five to six years old. There is no cure. All three must die. And I know they die. How many such nuclear families are already condemned to death in our country today? How many will be condemned to death in the next decade?

When HIV appeared in India in 1986, everybody thought that it is a Western disease that will be contacted only by sex workers in red light areas, gay men, and injecting drug users. The consequences of that myopic view are now upon us.

In India, sexually transmitted diseases are already a serious problem, and what is significant, nearly forty per cent of such diseases occur in the middle-class segment of our population. More significantly, persons already suffering from sexually transmitted diseases are more prone to HIV infections. What will this catastrophe mean to business and industry in, say, the year 2005?

Since the HIV/AIDS affliction is mostly in the productive age group of eighteen to forty, this could have grim consequences for our economy. Already, half the new infections in India are in this age group. Business and industry must take a hard and urgent note of this reality and act to increase awareness about AIDS and spread the message about its

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prevention.

For AIDS is preventable. You cannot prevent a common cold, but yes, you can prevent AIDS by taking precautions. HIV is transmitted through unprotected sex with an infected person, transfusion of infected blood and blood products, use of contaminated needles and syringes, and from an infected mother to her child via birth, and also through breast-feeding by infected mothers. AIDS is preventable through awareness. Awareness is the key to prevention.

However, unless we put in all out efforts to increase voluntary blood donation and meet the shortage of blood, we will not be able to achieve total blood safety in the country. I urge all of you to involve yourself in promotion of voluntary blood donation campaigns in your areas or constituencies and motivate the younger sections of society to make voluntary blood donation a habit. Donating blood is a healthy habit. It is also a redeeming habit.

Millions of HIV-positive persons and AIDS suffers are afraid to talk or seek medical help because they are burdened with undue guilt and stigma. Millions more Indians, hundreds of thousands of worried families want to know more about HIV/AIDS, but are afraid to ask.

They want almost foolproof confidentiality and anonymity. Victims of HIV/AIDS are seeking information in privacy. The extent of this quest for information in privacy about HIV/AIDS is demonstrated by the fact that the Central Government-run HOTLINE on AIDS in New Delhi (Number 1097) received 21,500 telephone calls in just the first fifty days of its starting in October 1997. My Government has decided to make the AIDS HOTLINE number, 1097 available in all cities and big towns of India toll-free.

Awareness is the only weapon we have today against AIDS. There is no single strategy for creating awareness. We must use every available medium of communication to spread the message across the country whether it is electronic media, print media, and even the folk media.

Cinema is a powerful tool of mass communication and education. After this meeting, a new Hindi film, *Nidaan*, is being screened. I have seen the film and it is a good film even without its subtle awareness message about HIV/AIDS. The awareness aspect makes it a powerful film.

Any campaign for awareness should not be the responsibility of Government agencies alone. We must involve community leaders, NGOs, and elected representatives of the people at various levels in this programme.

My appeal to the Members of Parliament is to take up the work of AIDS awareness on a priority basis in their constituencies. I would also urge the Chief Ministers of all the States to take up awareness campaigns personally by meeting Members of Legislative Assemblies, Chairpersons of Zilla Parishads, Panchayats, District Collectors, Municipal Corporation Chairpersons, NGOs, and community-based organizations.

As I have mentioned earlier, the section of the population most affected by HIV/AIDS is young people. They are highly impressionable and require proper education and awareness about reproductive issues including safe sexual behaviour.

There is a debate as to whether children of this age group should be taught about reproductive health. Information about sexual and reproductive health and right sexual behaviour can help the children in developing a necessary value system and face any eventuality, with courage and understanding.

I do not think we should hesitate to tell the children about the process of growing up and its implications. The growing threat of HIV/AIDS in the country points to the urgency of doing this sooner rather than later.

As the disease has spread in the last five years across the length the breadth of the country, we now have about three million to four million HIV infected people in our midst. Many of them are still asymptomatic but sooner than later, they will develop into full-blown AIDS cases. I hear distressing stories of

AIDS patients being thrown out of their homes, ostracized by their own families and society, and even denied admission and medical care in hospitals.

These acts are practised not just by ignorant people, but even by those who are knowledgeable and know how HIV/AIDS is spread or not spread. The medical profession has a special responsibility in this area.

It is the responsibility of people who are aware and who have the knowledge to fight against discrimination of HIV/AIDS-infected persons in the society. We should ensure that they have the same rights to education in schools and colleges, to employment, and for a rightful place in the society. We must respect their privacy with sympathy and understanding.

There is pressure from certain sections of the community to go for mandatory screening of HIV/AIDS. Nothing can be more shortsighted than this.

The moment we start mandatory screening, the infected persons will not come forward to avail of even the minimum amenities of care and support that are provided by the health care delivery system in the country. This will aggravate rather than solve the problem of HIV/AIDS in the country.

In the meantime, and since the Government has now accepted the figure of three million to four million infections currently, there is no need for a debate in the country as to the accuracy of these figures. We must accept the fact that a large number of our people are infected, and that there is no cure at present and also that prevention is the only long-term remedy.

I am confident that India will be able to overcome this problem, provided we take it seriously from now onwards. We have demonstrated our inherent infrastructural strength in taking up a number of socially relevant programmes; the latest being the polio immunization campaign in which twelve to thirteen million children have been given polio drops in a single day.

There is no reason why we should not be able to control

HIV/AIDS in India. It requires all out efforts by both the Government and the community; let us make a beginning towards this goal today.

We also need to develop our own, type-specific, anti-HIV vaccine. There are ongoing major international efforts to identify the various strains of HIV and develop a type-specific vaccine for cure and control. We must actively join this global effort. We must collaborate in currently promising research with other agencies worldwide to discover such a vaccine.

We have developed successfully a vaccine for Hepatitis-B. Efforts are on to develop a vaccine for Hepatitis-C also. There is no reason why we should not succeed in developing an HIV vaccine in India. We have the Indian Council of Medical Research, the Department of Biotechnology, the CSIR, and other institutes doing excellent work on various aspects of vaccine development. We have to bring these groups together in a "Mission-mode" to synergize their efforts.

I would request the Health Minister, who is present here today, to take the lead and organize a national team to explore the possibility of developing an indigenous vaccine in the most cost-effective fashion and to do this urgently.

In light of all that we know about this diabolical virus, and that currently there is no vaccine against it, India needs to act vigorously to dramatically enhance awareness. We also need to relentlessly search for an anti-HIV vaccine as a task of high priority and urgency.

In the meantime, we all will have to bring out the best in each one of us by way of compassion, understanding and love for those who are afflicted and already affected. India can do no less.

#### In the Well-being of the Mothers of India is the Honour of Mother India

TODAY IS INTERNATIONAL Women's Day. I join all the men of India and the world in extending hearty greetings to the better half of humanity for the betterment of life on earth. I especially felicitate all the women's organizations in the non-governmental sector who are making a commendable contribution to the realization of the goal of gender justice.

We celebrate this Day to recognize the unique and lofty role women play in the creation and recreation of human life on our planet.

We celebrate this Day to honour the priceless contribution women have made, and continue to make, to every vital facet of society—culture as well as agriculture, education as well as industry, and family-building as well as nation-building.

Indian women have left a mark of excellence in every field of national life. They have mastered medicine and information technology. They have also mastered the unique "home technology" that enables even poor women to so manage their meagre family budgets as to create a heaven-like environment of love and care in their families.

We celebrate International Women's Day to also remind ourselves of the many injustices and problems women of all classes and communities face, so that, in a spirit of solidarity, nations and institutions and individuals work together for their speedy renewal.

Without women's advancement, the nation cannot hold its

Speech on the occasion of International Women's Day, New Delhi, 8 March 1999

head high. And when, women advance, nothing can stop India from advancing to the forefront of the international community.

I say so because women are an embodiment of power. In India, the deities for wealth, knowledge, and creative power are all goddesses—Laxmi, Saraswati, and Shakti. Shakti is the feminine energy that pervades the entire Universe. It is the same energy that manifests itself in Mother Nature, Mother Earth, Mother India, and also in the mothers who sustain our families.

This feminine energy expresses itself in many life-sustaining values, such as *mamata* (compassion), *sahishnuta* (tolerance), *seva* (service), and *sahakar* (cooperation).

Unfortunately, we in India have neglected Nari Shakti or women's power. To that extent, we have enfeebled Mother India.

How can India be strong when millions of our mothers are condemned to illiteracy? When they are ill-fed and ill-housed? When there is inadequate provision of healthcare for them and their children? When many of them, especially in rural areas, have to spend long hours each day in drudgery such as fetching drinking water and fuel wood? Worse still, how can we be proud of our culture when, in free India, many women do not feel fully free or safe in streets, workplaces, and public places? And when they continue to be victims of discriminatory and often humiliating customs? When the sex ratio is continually declining and preference for the male child continues to be strong?

Even as we celebrate Women's Day, we should debate these issues widely and seriously. These issues cannot be dealt with by the Government alone, although we in the Government have a major responsibility to shoulder. Only by raising the awareness at all levels in our society can we overcome the problems facing women.

Hence my message to my countrymen today is: Let us empower our women, so that we can empower the nation. In the well-being of the Mothers of India is the honour of Mother India.

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I recognize that empowerment of women cannot be without struggle. This struggle, however, is to be waged by women and men together. The Indian tradition believes in the concept of complimentarity—and not conflict—between the sexes.

This is an area where women's organizations of India can make a unique contribution to the movement for women's emancipation around the world.

I have said that women of all communities face problems in discrimination and disparity. In dealing with these problems, however, we should not seek solutions that are totally alien—much less antithetical—to the religious and cultural values of the respective communities.

The core principles of every religion have emphasized the equality of men and women. Experience also shows that the cause of women's empowerment can be better advanced by anchoring these struggles in these core principles.

This does not, of course, preclude the need for a free debate on the desirability of learning from diverse experiences both within and without India.

Most importantly, social reform should be preceded by intensive and extensive social awareness about gender justice within respective communities. Economic and political advancement of women is an inseparable part of women's empowerment. Here, too, there is a great need for affirmative action.

There was positive discrimination in favour of women in the 73<sup>rd</sup> and 74<sup>th</sup> Amendments to our Constitution, wherein we have provided for one-third of the membership for women in rural panchayats and urban self-government bodies. We are now becoming increasingly familiar with competent women sarpanch, mayors, and chairpersons of municipalities.

The time has come for extending this historic provision to the Lok Sabha and Vidhan Sabhas also. That is why, my Government is committed to enact, at the earliest, a legislation in Parliament that reserves 33 per cent of the seats for women.

I once again appeal to all the political parties to support this revolutionary initiative. Extraneous considerations such as sub-quotas should not be brought in at this stage to subvert the bill

Similarly, in order to increase economic opportunities for women, the time has come to think of affirmative action in employment, bank credit, housing allotment, and similar governmental schemes.

I call for a national debate on the nature and quantum of special supportive provisions we should enact, so that we create parity in place of disparity for women in the economic sphere.

I have seen for myself how schemes targeted exclusively for women, and implemented mostly by women themselves, have produced excellent results. A case in point is the Kudumbashree programme in Kerala, which has mobilized women in micro-credit institutions at the grassroots. The success of the Rashtriya Mahila Kosh, set up by the Central Government, also shows the enormous scope that exists for economic empowerment of poor working women.

My sisters and mothers, today I wish to assure all of you that my Government will work tirelessly on every front for your well-being.

We shall increase the opportunities for women's education at all levels—especially, primary education for the girl child.

We shall implement the Integrated Child Development Services Scheme (ICDS) with greater vigour.

We shall strengthen the enforcement of rape laws and take adequate protection measures for women working in the unorganized sector.

Samman (dignity) and Samanata (equality) for women are articles of faith for us. I reiterate my commitment to this faith today.

Let us together create a better tomorrow for our women, which is the greatest guarantor of a better tomorrow for India and the world. CC-0. Nanaji Deshmukh Library, BJP, Jammu. Digitized by eGangotri

## Providing Succour to Rural Women

**E**LEVEN DAYS AGO, on International Women's Day, we reaffirmed our commitment to the economic empowerment of our sisters and mothers. Today, I am happy to announce that, for the poorest women, substantial progress is being made to provide them financial security. Educating girls is the most valuable investment that any country can make in its future. I am delighted to know that the specially designed insurance scheme that guarantees funds for education has also started functioning well.

On August 15 last year, I had told my fellow citizens that my Government would launch two new insurance schemes—the Bhagyashree Child Welfare Policy and the Rajrajeshwari Mahila Kalyan Bima Yojana. The first would provide funds for girls to complete their education if they lost either of their parents. The second would provide an income to women who lost their husbands, or who became disabled.

I had said that these schemes would be operational on Diwali. Thanks to the hard work done by the General Insurance Corporation, and its four subsidiaries, this deadline was met. Today, more than one hundred thousand policies have already been sold.

Friends, Bharat Ratna Dr. Amartya Sen, who won last year's Nobel Prize for Economics, has long said that Government must invest much more in the social sector, and that education for all is the first priority of every developing country. These are my beliefs too.

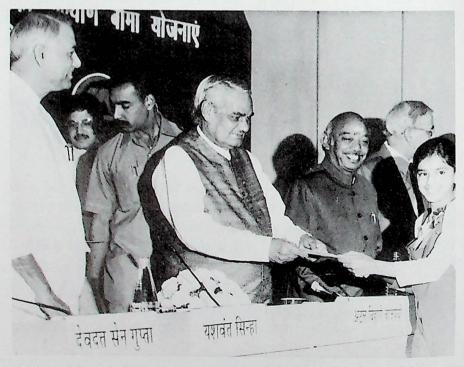
While the provision of education is the responsibility of the States, the Centre can, and must, do everything possible to assist them in fulfilling this obligation. The Bhagyashree Scheme

Speech while launching the Bhagyashree and Rajrajeshwari Insurance Schemes, New Delhi, 19 March 1999

is one step forward by the Centre in contributing its mite.

This Scheme recognizes the reality of rural India. Where, the provision of education to children, especially to girls, is not always the first priority of parents, and even less so, if the breadwinner of the family passes away, leaving the family dependent on others. Girls are always the first to be taken out of school and put into other work. The Bhagyashree Scheme will, hopefully, change this, as it will provide money to let their continue their education.

Thus, while it is the States who have to increase the "supply" of education, this Scheme will increase the "demand" for education. I would like the States to be prepared to meet this "demand" by suitably upgrading their educational infrastructure.



Prime Minister Shri Atal Bihari Vajpayee handing over Bhagyashree Insurance Policy to a girl child, New Delhi, 19 March 1999

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Many widows are not treated well in our society. Because they lose their financial security, they are forced to depend on others, who may exploit them in every way. The same also applies to self-employed women, who, if they are disabled, and hence, cannot earn anymore, become dependant on others. The Rajrajeshwari Mahila Kalyan Bima Yojana will provide some financial succour and, hence, independence to our womenfolk.

These two schemes will, thus, achieve an important social objective—providing a safety net to our mothers, sisters, and daughters. The best part is, that they do so, without the Government having to spend any money. This is done through the miracle of group insurance, where, by paying nominal sums by everyone, ensures that the small proportion who need the money will get it.

Friends, there is a big debate about insurance sector reforms. We hope to allow new Indian insurance companies to enter the market soon and compete with the existing players. What is forgotten though, is the contribution of the existing players. They have expanded the insurance market and have provided risk cover to all kinds of businesses and people.

What is important though is that they are also providing this risk cover to the poor and the powerless, by these and other schemes. I compliment them for this. Provision of these schemes, however, is not an obligation forced on them by an unwilling owner—the Government. Rather, thanks to their competence, these schemes are viable on their own.

I would like that all future insurance companies also show their commitment to every section of society. They must compete with the existing players in providing better risk coverage to the well-off. At the same time, they must also compete in providing coverage to the poorest.

Making Bhagyashree and Rajrajeshwari a success, will, however, require the participation of the State Governments in a big way. They can and must take coverage of their residents in a larger way. For instance, every Gram Panchayat can insure all its girls and women, and so can every municipality. This

will earn them a discount. Insuring one crore girls will cost only Rs. 8 to 14 crore a year, which every State can afford. Insuring one crore women will cost only Rs. 5 to 6 crore, which, again every State can afford.

States must also collaborate with the General Insurance Corporation and its affiliates in ensuring better delivery of these schemes. No widow or disabled woman or orphan girl should have to trudge to some distant office and furnish all kinds of papers to some uncaring official to show that she is eligible to receive the one-time or recurring benefits under these schemes. No one should have to bribe somebody to ensure that they get what is rightfully theirs.

I hope that these schemes will go from strength to strength, providing succour to an increasing number of our mothers, sisters, and daughters. In the last one year, my Government has done many things for the betterment of the lives of our citizens. Bhagyashree and Rajrajeshwari are among the most important.

My best wishes to General Insurance Corporation and its affiliates for the success of these schemes.

# Women's Participation in Political Leadership

IT GIVES ME great pleasure to participate in this function and share with you some of my ideas on democracy in general and women's empowerment in particular.

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Speech at a seminar on "Democracy in Internal Party Structures" New Delhi, 26 March 1999

I know that Veena Nayyar and other members of the Women's Political Watch have a special reason for drawing the nation's attention to the subject under discussion today. That reason is clearly expressed in the organization's mission statement itself—namely, "Conducting non-partisan programmes to increase women's participation in public policy and political leadership"

I have not only empathy but also full solidarity with your mission.

Women hold half the sky, so why shouldn't they hold at least one-third of the political ground? The insignificant number of women in Parliament and State Legislatures has robbed these august houses of their representative character.

Unfortunately, the cause of political empowerment of women has so far received support more in words, than in action. For this, all political parties have to share the blame to a greater or lesser degree. I must hasten to state that my party, the Bharatiya Janata Party, and our allies in the ruling coalition have less to blame in this regard.

You are aware that two of our alliance parties—the AIADMK and the Trinamool Congress—are headed by women leaders. Both Dr. Jayalalitha and Sushree Mamata Banerjee are leaders with exceptional mass appeal. Today, they are playing an important role in national politics.

The BJP was the first party to formally adopt, at its national executive meeting in Vadodara way back in 1987, a resolution seeking 33 per cent reservation for women in Parliament and State Legislatures. Since then, we have consistently championed the cause both in and outside the elected houses in Delhi and in the State capitals. Speaking of internal democracy, our Party's constitution mandates that at least one of the five general secretaries has to be a woman. Our party also has, proportionately, the largest number of women MPs in the Lok Sabha. I must, however, admit that the level of participation of women in decision-making and in the party's activities at various levels is still well below my satisfaction. In the BJP, too,

as in all other parties the Mahila Morcha is one of the peripheral organisations and not integral to shaping the policies and programmes of the party. All political parties share this failure, although some have recently taken welcome steps to increase the representation of women in decision-making bodies. I wish the leadership of these parties attach equal importance to the earliest passage of the Women's Reservation Bill in Parliament.

The National Agenda for Governance, which is the policy blueprint of our coalition, clearly states under the heading "Empowerment of Women" that: "We will legislate for the reservation of 33 per cent of the seats in Parliament and State Assemblies for women, and institute plans for providing free education for girls up to college level, including professional courses, so as to better empower them."

As you know, our Government lost no time in initiating action on our promise to amend the Constitution to reserve one-third of the seats in Parliament and State Legislatures. A Bill to this effect has already been introduced in Parliament. Unfortunately, some political parties are holding up its passage for reasons that are totally unrelated to the purpose for which this law for affirmative action is intended. Worse still, the manner in which even a debate on the subject was stalled in the Lok Sabha, marked one of the lowest points in India's parliamentary democracy. Women of all classes and castes are victims of discrimination and deprivation. Hence the proposed Women's Reservation Bill is intended to empower all women. Raising the issue of sub-quotas at this stage dilutes the emphasis on gender justice. It also deepens the divisiveness that already plagues our social and political life.

I appeal to my friends in all the parties to cooperate with us in the passage of this historic legislation at the earliest. What is at stake is the very credibility of the entire political establishment in the eyes of Indian women. If we do not immediately implement our commonly and frequently stated commitment to political reservation for women, they could well think that men in general have no real interest in women enjoying equal opportunities in politics.

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How women will interpret our failure to pass the reservation bill is, perhaps, less important than its harmful effect in Indian democracy. Democracy is not, as one cynical commentator has put it, the name we give the people whenever we need them. Remembering women voters only at the time of elections, but not taking vigorous and consistent steps for their economic, social, and political empowerment, makes a mockery of democracy.

In this context it is instructive to remember the profound words of Dr. Babasaheb Ambedkar. The chief architect of the Constitution, speaking in the Constituent Assembly at the time of the final reading of the draft on November 25, 1949, said: "We must make our political democracy a social and economic democracy as well. Political democracy cannot last unless there lies at its base, social and economic democracy."

This, in my view, is the kernel of the concept of social justice. Unfortunately, social justice has been narrowly projected in recent years. It focuses only on issues of caste, excluding issues of gender justice. The discrimination women face in all spheres of life, including in politics, is one of the principal features of social injustice in India.

Unless gender injustice is tackled and removed with clarity of purpose, and courage in action, ours will continue to be a disabled democracy.

On the contrary, greater and more active participation of women in politics and public life would certainly make our democracy healthier. It would inject the values of tolerance, restraint, and cooperation in the functioning of our democratic institutions. If one-third of our MPs were women I doubt if we would witness the kind of unbecoming scenes we so routinely do in our Parliament.

I am convinced that, in the long run, women's empowerment will positively transform the social and political agenda around the world. If women can manage their families with so much care and foresight, they could also do so when they get opportunities to manage the affairs of society and the

nation.

It is, therefore, not enough that women have greater representation in politics, administration, and other public institutions. What is needed for the representation to be effective is more and more women in leading positions.

The absence of women's participation in decision-making often has a direct bearing on the outcome of policies, programmes, and welfare schemes especially when women are the intended beneficiaries. There is an urgent need for men to change their mindset. If greater representation of women in politics and public life is one pillar of the gate opening the road to women's empowerment, the other pillar of the same gate is greater sensitization of men to issues of gender justice.

What this means is that greater representation of women in inner-party committees and in Panchayats and other higher elected bodies, should not be seen as tokenism. We have seen how the introduction of reservation for women in Panchayats and other local self-government bodies has brought about a visible improvement in their functioning. If it can work well in our Panchayats, why can't it work in our Parliament?

Of course, in the transition to genuine empowerment, there will be instances when women members in such bodies become proxies for men. I hear that in some Panchayats, where the office of Gram Pradhan is reserved for women, the villagers call the husband of the woman "pradhan pati"!

Happily, such instances are becoming less and less as women leaders begin to leave their mark of competence and success in their jobs. What our sisters and mothers need is opportunity to be more active in political and public life—including in the inner party committees. We have no right to deprive them of these opportunities. Rather, we have a moral, Constitutional and social duty to enhance these opportunities for them.

With these words, I conclude this function and congratulate the Women's Political Watch for organizing it.

#### VI International Affairs

#### Shared Vision of the Future

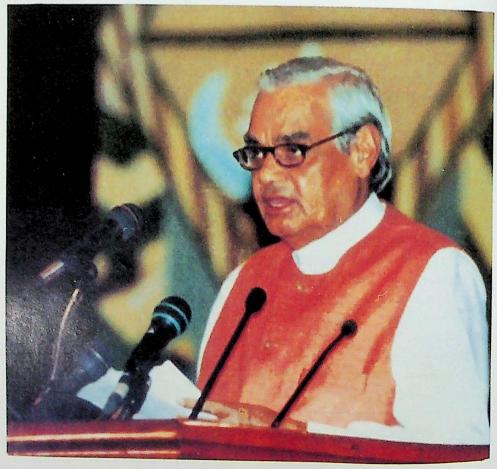
I AM GRATEFUL to our gracious hosts and particularly to our friend, the President of Sri Lanka for the warm welcome and splendid hospitality extended to us. It is indeed a pleasure for me to be in Colombo to participate in the tenth SAARC summit. This is my first visit abroad since assuming office and it is only doubly appropriate that this is to attend the SAARC summit—my first, and, to Sri Lanka a country with which we share the closest bonds of friendship stretching back to antiquity. Our traditional historical links have been reinforced in recent times by our shared struggle against colonialism and our post-independence experience as countries seeking to develop within a democratic framework.

We are meeting in the Golden Jubilee year of Sri Lanka's independence. This gives our meeting added significance. Sri Lanka has made remarkable progress since its independence and it is with a sense of justifiable pride that its people are celebrating so joyously the 50th Anniversary of their independence. I convey warm greetings and felicitations to you and to the Government and people of Sri Lanka on this happy occasion.

Our presence here today is a reflection of the affection and regard in which we all hold you. Our efforts to strengthen cooperation in our region have benefited greatly from the personal interest you have taken and the many initiatives you have suggested. Indeed, Sri Lanka has played a key role in forging a consensus on the vital issues of trade and economic cooperation in our region. I am sure that under your able guidance, this summit will chart a concrete and forward-looking agenda for the future. I would also like to express our deep appreciation for the wise counsel and able leadership provided by President Gayoom in steering our Association over the last year.

Speech at the inaugural session of SAARC Summit, Colombo, 29 July 1998

Since the establishment of SAARC in 1985, this organization has contributed to fostering regional cooperation. The first steps are always difficult. Over the years SAARC has gained experience. The people of the region now expect to see the economic benefits of regional cooperation touch their lives—this is the promise and the challenge that we must collectively address.



Prime Minister Shri Atal Bihari Vajpayee speaking at the inaugural session of the SAARC Summit, Colombo, 29 July 1998 CC-0. Nanaji Deshmukh Library, BJP, Jammu. Digitized by eGangoin

Today, as we stand on the threshold of a new century we need to evolve a shared vision of the future of our region. Such a vision must be rooted in our common values and be based on our individual and collective strengths that will enable South Asia to realize its full potential in the coming century.

Major economic changes are taking place in the world around us which have a significant impact on our region. The twin trends of globalization and liberalization have dramatically altered the dynamics of the international economic environment. The increasing globalization of economic processes has been accompanied by the emergence and consolidation of vast new economic groupings. The financial crisis in many countries including East Asia has exposed the vulnerability of even relatively dynamic developing economies as well as the weakness of the international monetary and financial system to cope with the stresses and strains of global financial liberalization. There is need for SAARC countries to identify, understand and face up to these challenges. We have, so far, not had to face similar difficulties in South Asia. We need to identify the strengths and weaknesses of our structures and policies, so as to make sure that we are able to avoid the difficulties, while taking full advantage of the globalization and liberalization that we are determined to follow. I propose that the Governors of our Reserve Banks and Finance Secretaries meet annually to have a dialogue on macro-economic policies and to share experiences and ideas.

Strengthening the framework of our economic cooperation must remain the focus of the SAARC agenda. All Governments should ensure that there are no delays in the SAARC process and that agreed time-tables for our various programmes are adhered to. In particular, we should not deny ourselves the benefits of trade liberalization. Such measures not only promote growth but would also help in attricating foreign capital and resources to our region as well as in creating an overall climate that is favourable to peace and development.

Two rounds of trade liberalization have been completed. India offered the maximum concessions in these two rounds

covering over 1,000 tariff lines. We also offered the deepest tariff cuts with special concessions for the Least Developed Countries (LDCs). The impact of these openings will take some time to be assessed as they came into effect only between March and December last year.

The third round of SAPTA negotiations made a promising start in July last year with all delegations agreeing to go beyond a product-by-product approach and negotiate concession on a sectorial or chapter-wise basis. There has unfortunately been delay in concluding these negotiations. We must collectively ensure that the momentum is maintained and these talks are concluded quickly.

On its part, India is willing to take concrete steps to speed up trade liberalization. I take this opportunity to offer that, as a special gesture, India will lift quantitative restrictions maintained for balance of payments reasons on a preferential basis for SAARC countries with effect from August 1, 1998. This would involve lifting restrictions on over 2,000 products and would substantially increase the opportunities for our SAARC partners to access our market and increase their exports. Our negotiators would also have the mandate to offer significant tariff reduction during the SAPTA negotiations.

Our decision taken last year in Male to advance the target date for achieving a Free Trade Area had galvanized the business community. We must reaffirm our commitment to the goal of SAFTA by the year 2001 and take steps to make this goal a reality. For this purpose, I propose that we begin immediate negotiations on a separate SAFTA treaty, which will spell out in detail the schedules for freeing trade, including elimination of discriminatory trade practices, lifting non-tariff barriers and tariff reduction. In this process the special needs of the Least Developed Countries (LDCs) must be taken into account. This would provide a predictable and transparent road-map for achieving SAFTA and lend greater credibility and weight to our Association. We should aim to conclude this treaty and have it in place by the year 2001.

India would also be willing to consider bilateral free trade agreements with those countries which are interested in moving faster.

Trade and investment are closely inter-linked. The promotion of joint ventures would develop trade complementarities and lead to an expansion of Intra-SAARC trade which is at an unacceptably low level today. An institutional framework by way of bilateral or regional agreements for investment promotion and protection is essential to provide the necessary confidence to investors. A regional investment agreement has been circulated at the first SAARC meeting on investment promotion and protection held in September last year and should be pursued. Similarly, regional arrangements for avoiding double taxation and for settlement of commercial disputes would need to be put in place. In this connection, we welcome the offer of Pakistan to host the first meeting on double taxation avoidance next month.

Steps at the institutional level need to be supported by a vigorous private sector effort to identify and implement specific projects on the ground. The decision of the SAARC chamber of commerce and industry to convene an annual SAARC investment forum is a welcome move. We, in India, have taken specific steps to promote investment by Indian entrepreneurs in SAARC countries. In January this year, we have doubled the ceiling for overseas indian investment in SAARC countries under the fast track. I am now announcing a further substantial increase, so that investments of up to US \$ 15 million will be cleared on the fast track, thus encouraging further economic cooperation among SAARC countries.

Collective self-interest has been the guiding spirit of regional cooperation the world over. Those regional groupings that have succeeded have done so by creating a common regional economic space, providing for the free flow of goods, capital and services. Our vision should be to look beyond SAFTA to the evolution of a SAARC economic community early in the next century.

Our region is energy-deficient even though some of the countries in our region have considerable untapped energy resources. We could take some immediate steps towards regional cooperation in this area which will contribute to the economic well being of the producers and the users. We should also consider cooperation in infrastructure particularly transportation for removing the bottlenecks for expeditious movement of goods. Steps, such as these will facilitate closer linkages and our move in the direction of an economic community.

Economic growth by itself will not mean much if vast sections of our people continue to live in hunger and ill-health and without shelter, clean drinking water and other essentials basic to a life of dignity. Poverty eradication, therefore, remains central to our development strategy. It is in recognition of this that SAARC has committed itself to the goal of poverty eradication in the region through a concerted agenda of action. We must make effective use of the SAARC three-tier mechanism on poverty alleviation to share experiences, information and data, learn from one another's success stories and also from our mistakes. Over the years, all of us have accumulated experience in planning. Perhaps a mechanism could be established to share experiences between our planning organizations.

It is important for SAARC to identify and implement specific technology initiatives which would have a direct impact in improving living conditions in our villages where the overwhelming majority of our people live. Technologies for rural telecommunication, drinking water and sanitation and development of improved plant varieties are some suggestions which come to mind. India would be happy to host a special meeting of SAARC Ministers for Science and Technology to consider such a SAARC technology initiative. We also offer to host a meeting of our Health Ministers to consider cooperation in the field of traditional systems of medicines in which all our countries have a rich heritage.

Apprehensions have been expressed in some quarters that recent development in South Asia could cause a set-back to the CC-0. Nanaji Deshmukh Library, BJP, Jammu. Digitized by eGangotri

SAARC process. Let me say that these apprehensions are misplaced. SAARC cooperation is driven by the imperative need for all South Asian countries to accelerate socio-economic development, reduce and eradicate poverty and enhance the quality of life of their peoples. It is in recognition of this that the founding fathers of SAARC took a conscious decision not to burden it with bilateral concerns, many of which existed even then and to keep contentious issues out of SAARC. India has scrupulously respected this provision of the SAARC charter. In fact SAARC reminds us that we should seek what unites us and not dwell on our divisions. At the same time, we have every reason to hope that building a positive framework of cooperation in our region will have a beneficial effect on bilateral relations. SAARC also provides a unique opportunity for informal bilateral discussions among the leaders and officials of member states on the sidelines. Such exchanges do help to promote mutual trust and understanding.

Let me categorically reaffirm that India continues to seek good relations with all its neighbours and to work with them to build on our commonalities and shared aspirations for development. Differences should be resolved in a rational manner, peacefully and through bilateral negotiations. We have consistently been in favour of a serious sustained dialogue on these lines.

India's strong commitment to global nuclear disarmament and our conviction that our security as well as that of the rest of the world would be best ensured in a nuclear weapons free world, remains a principle element of our policy. We will continue working on effective programmes and initiatives to reach this objective. In particular, we will continue working actively for a Nuclear Weapons Convention providing for the elimination of nuclear-weapons worldwide within a time-bound framework. This is by no means a utopian position. Experience in dealing with negotiations on other weapons of mass destruction such as the Chemical and Biological weapons conventions indicate that the only successful way is to negotiate treaties which are comprehensive in scope, universal in applicability and non-discriminatory in character. We are

convinced that such an approach is also necessary in dealing with nuclear weapons. We are sure that SAARC member countries also share this objective.

I think our deliberations over the next two days will be important. We must concentrate on the economic and social agenda and move forward at a pace which will yield tangible and concrete results and benefits for over one billion people of our region, to strengthen their faith in SAARC and in the ability of our peoples to work together for common good.

Five millennia of cohabitation are drawing to a close and the sixth is about to start. We have come a long way together and we have to decide how and where we aim to go. We represent great civilizations, ancient yet vibrant and alive. Our people are talented, our lands well-endowed. And yet, we are among the poorest in the world.

Together we all fought a sustained and successful campaign of independence and overcame the mightiest empire in the world. Today fifty years after independence it is time for us to break with the past and declare our interdependence and our essential oneness even as we celebrate our national diversity. I offer the following thoughts for your consideration:

Enough of sterile ideology, enough of hostile nationalism, enough of conflict on the basis of religion and creed, enough of poverty and backwardness, let us now grow rich together.

This is the will of the people, the dictate of times and the duty of the leaders. Let us not falter.

# An Age-old Cultural Bond

I AM HAPPY to be here today, and to have the opportunity to inaugurate the Indian Cultural Centre in Sri Lanka. We are happy to have with us Honourable Lankan Ministers.

On August 15, 1997 during the commencement of the celebrations of our fiftieth year of Independence here in Colombo, Her Excellency President Chandrika Kumaratunge had stated "India has a glorious history which, in one way or another, all the countries of South Asia share, and in which we all take pride and pleasure. It is a history, I venture to say, which the whole world admires, studies, and also celebrates. India in fact, is not just a country or state; it is an entire civilization; one of the distinctive achievements of the human heritage."

I value these sentiments about shared legacies. The cultural links between Sri Lanka and India go back over millennia. Scholars may debate about the historicity and geographical location of the Lanka of our epics, but in the popular imagination, ties between us had existed even then. The greatest legacy and bond that we inherit is of course that of Gautama, the Lord Buddha. History celebrates the voyage of Prince Mahindra and Princess Sanghamitra who, as emissaries of Emperor Ashoka, brought Buddhism to Sri Lanka. The mythologies and epics in both our countries recorded histories and old architecture—all testify to the age-old spiritual and cultural links.

Coming to modern times, the cultural links between India and Sri Lanka have continue to be close, fruitful and mutually supportive. Gurudev Rabindranath Tagore made three important visits to Sri Lanka and left a lasting impression on the Sri Lankan intellectual and artistic scene. Tagore was captivated by the verdant lushness of Sri Lanka. During his

Speech while inaugurating the Indian Cultural Centre, Colombo, 30 July 1998

last trip in 1934, opening an institution at Horana, not far from Colombo, Tagore said, "It reminds me of my own working in Bengal, this institution which you have started". The beautiful name that he gave to this institution was "Sri Palee" translated as "where beauty reigns".

Another interesting feature was the deep impression Tagore made on a young Sri Lankan who reviewed Tagore's play "Shapmochan" when it was staged in Colombo. This young reviewer was none other than Mr. S. W. R. D. Bandaranaike, later to become the Prime Minister.

The enduring influence of Tagore is seen to this day in the melodies in Sri Lankan music. Other visits that one recalls are that of Swami Vivekananda, the centenary of which was celebrated last year both in Sri Lanka and India, and the visits by Pandit Nehru who was enthralled by the image of the Samadhi Buddha — Buddha in meditation—at Anuradhapura. From Sri Lanka, scholars like Ananda Coomaraswami and Anagarika Dharmapala made seminal contributions to the study of our common heritage.

In the contemporary period these cultural linkages and even affinities have continued to grow. Both classical schools of Indian music, Hindustani and Carnatic, have adherents and enthusiasts here. Bharat Natyam has many practitioners and the artists and architects in both our countries benefit from frequent interaction. I am glad that Hindi classes are popular. The adulation that the Hindi film stars enjoy in Sri Lanka can only be matched by the popularity of Sri Lankan cricketers in India.

There is indeed much in common and shared between our countries. The importance of culture as one of the main planks of global intreraction is going to grow immesurably in the coming century and millennium. In the unfolding of this new phase of human history, South Asia must make a contribution commensurate with its size, population, and the worth of its cultural heritage. The close links that bind South Asia with West Asia on the one hand and South Fast Asia on the other, and the other other.

suggest that the SAARC community can greatly aid the cultural revival of Asia as a whole.

I wish to view the establishment of the Indian Cultural Centre in Colombo as a small but significant initiative in this broader matrix of cultural cooperation in SAARC and in Asia. This is the first cultural Centre established by the Indian Council of Cultural Relations in South Asia. The fact that it is being set up in a year when both India and Sri Lanka are celebrating their 50th Independence anniversaries underlines the importance we attach to the Indo-Sri Lankan link in the emerging Asian design.

I have no doubt that the Indian Cultural Centre will act as one more forum and one more instrument to bring our two countries together. I wish the Centre all success.

# SAARC: India Committed to its Growth

OVER THE LAST few weeks, Government has kept the House regularly informed about developments in the field of international relations and our foreign policy. I take this opportunity to bring Honourable Members up-to-date on the most recent events, especially SAARC, our relations with Pakistan, and the recent ARF and ASEAN dialogue meetings.

I visited Colombo on 28th-31st July, 1998 to participate in the Tenth SAARC summit. I was accompanied by Commerce Minister, Deputy Chairman, Planning Commission, as well as Minister of State for External Affairs who led our delegation at the Ministerial level meeting preceding the summit.

The summit reaffirmed the common desire of SAARC Member States to strengthen cooperation in the region. There was general agreement with our perception that to meet the challenges and to avail of the opportunities presented by the substantially transformed global economic situation, it was essential to enhance bilateral as well as SAARC regional, economic, social and technical cooperation. The agenda and the discussions during the Summit were focussed on these areas.

It was agreed that SAARC must move purposefully towards setting up a Free Trade Area; a group of experts will be set up to negotiate a comprehensive legal framework for this purpose incorporating schedules for liberalized trade and facilitation measures, taking into account least developed countries' concerns. Parallel steps will be taken to conclude the third round of the trade negotiations under the South Asian Preferential Trading Arrangement, and to commence the next round.

We have reiterated our commitment to, and readiness for bold initiatives to speed up trade liberalization. I announced our Government's decision to lift all quantitative restrictions preferentially, on imports from SAARC countries, with effect from August 1, 1998. This is a decision with far-reaching positive economic and developmental consequences for the region and has been welcomed. We also made known our readiness to enter into bilateral free trade arrangements with interested SAARC countries. Sri Lanka has taken up this offer.

In our discussion, it was recognized that the benefits of trade liberalization would be more extensive and balanced through promoting trade-related joint ventures, investment and trade-in-services such as tourism. India's decision to substantially increase the ceiling for investment for India under the fast track in SAARC countries, from US \$ 8 to US \$ 15 million has also been welcomed. This will encourage a greater flow of Indian investment and stimulate trade.

Important initiatives have been taken in the social sector CC-0. Nanaji Deshmukh Library, BJP, Jammu. Digitized by eGangotif

to illustrate, a Social Charter for SAARC, agreement to finalize a convention to combat Illegal Trafficking in Women and Children. This is to be signed at the next SAARC Summit. A regional convention on child welfare will also be developed.

We underlined the importance of cooperation in energy through networking. India has further offered to host a special meeting of Science and Technology Ministers consider a SAARC S & T initiative for regional projects in rural areas, directly benefiting the people. We also underlined the utility of cooperation in traditional systems of medicines and have invited participation in a Health Ministers' meeting in India for this purpose. India has reaffirmed support for comprehensive environment related proposals.

I would also like to draw attention to my bilateral meetings on the sidelines of the Summit, with the Presidents of Maldives and Sri Lanka, the Prime Ministers of Bangladesh and Nepal and the Chairman of the Council of Ministers of Bhutan. These meetings provided the occasion for renewing our friendly contact, for fruitful discussions enabling a review of our bilateral relations and of progress in specific areas of cooperation, as well as for sharing our perceptions.

I took the opportunity, in my interaction with other leaders, to reiterate our commitment to peace and stability, setting at rest misconceptions about our recent nuclear tests. Our initiatives for confidence building and disarmament have been appreciated. There was agreement on the need to commence purposeful negotiations towards a comprehensive and non-discriminatory global nuclear disarmament regime and a nuclear weapon-free world.

We have conveyed our appreciation to the Sri Lankan Government for the excellent arrangements made for the Summit, and in particular to President Chandrika Kumaratunga for the vision and efficiency with which she steered the summit deliberations. We wish her well in her new responsibility in chairing SAARC. We assure Sri Lanka of our full support.

In my interaction with Pakistan PM, Mr. Muhammed

Nawaz Sharif, which included a long meeting on July 29, I reiterated our commitment to developing peaceful and friendly ties with Pakistan, and our interest in a secure, stable and prosperous Pakistan. I urged that we should work together to develop trust and confidence, and avail of the many opportunities for mutually beneficial cooperation in the economic, social and other fields so that we can improve the lives of peoples. I further underlined the need to work together to address our differences in a rational and realistic manner. The atmosphere of our discussions was cordial and constructive. I look forward to continuing a purposeful interaction with Prime Minister Nawaz Sharif.

My discussions with Prime Minister Nawaz Sharif also focussed on our official level dialogue. Honourable Members will recall that such a dialogue had been resumed last year, and that the subjects for discussion were jointly identified in June, 1997. The modalities for this purpose have not yet been finalized. We directed our Foreign Secretaries to meet and complete this exercise.

India has consistently underlined its commitment to a direct, composite dialogue with Pakistan. Such a comprehensive and sustained process will contribute to building trust and confidence, promote mutually beneficial cooperation and help address bilateral issues. The dialogue must address the totality of the reationship and not be pursued in a narrow, segmented fashion, which would defeat its very purpose which is to build a wide ranging and enduring relationship. A direct bilateral interaction, which seeks to generate confidence and foster cooperation in functional areas, and enhanced people to people contacts, would also help create a positive climate, in which difficult issues under discussion could be purposefully addressed. It is recognized by the international community that all outstanding issues between India and Pakistan, including Jammu and Kashmir should be settled bilaterally in a peaceful manner. The modalities which we have suggested would help ensure that the process moves forward on a broad front in a constructive and sustained manner, while at the same time providing a meaningful opportunity for discussions on CC-0. Nanaji Deshmukh Library, BJP, Jammu. Digitized by eGangotri

confidence building measures, cooperation and dealing with outstanding issues, as part of a composite process.

Our Foreign Secretaries met in Colombo and exchanged views on this subject. We will remain engaged in the process and continue contacts through diplomatic channels, to work out an agreement, so that the dialogue could be continued.

During my talks with PM Nawaz Sharif, I also emphasized that instigation and support of terrorism was incompatible with our common desire for friendly and peaceful relations and that these activities must cease immediately.

Honourable Members are aware that we also participated in this year's ASEAN Post-Ministerial Conference which is an important part of ASEAN's interaction with its dialogue partners, as well as the ASEAN Regional Forum (ARF) Meetings, held on July 24-29. Our delegation was led by Deputy Chairman, Planning Commission. My government has reaffirmed the policy of strengthening cooperation with countries in ASEAN and the Asia Pacific Region as a whole. Apart from bilateral contacts, we have also established active communication with them in the framework of the dialogue partnership and ARF. Our participation in these meetings this year, was particularly important, as it provided an opportunity to once again clarify our policy on nuclear disarmament in the context of the recent tests, as well as to demonstrate our continued engagement in the economic and political stability of the region and share perceptions on regional and international developments. While the ARF "Chairman's Statement" contained a paragraph disapproving of the recent tests in South Asia, with which we disassociated ourselves, we also found a better overall understanding on the part of ASEAN countries of the rationale of our policy, as well as of the need for purposeful moves by the Nuclear Weapon states towards comprehensive, universal nuclear disarmament on a non discriminatory basis. We assure the ASEAN countries that we fully respected the status of the Nuclear Weapon Free Zone in South East Asia.

Our interaction with ASEAN reflected an understanding

that cooperation and dialogue partnership with India had made good progress, and that we needed to jointly consolidate this through implementation of projects and measures under discussion, in trade and investment, infrastructure and human resource development, tourism, culture and people to people contacts.

The leader of our delegation also had constructive and forward looking discussions with the Foreign Ministers of ASEAN countries, Russia, China, Australia and New Zealand, the US Secretary of State and the Ministers of State of Japan and the United Kingdom. Our bilateral and multilateral interaction in the ASEAN and ARF meetings has helped our post-Pokhran-II diplomatic efforts. Our overall approach and importance of the steps we have taken to address international and regional security concerns is better acknowledged. There is also continued recognition that India is a factor for peace, stability in the region.

# India and South Africa: A Saga of Friendship

I AM HAPPY to be here to participate in this function organized by the Arya Pratinidhi Sabha. I thank Dr. Rambilas for the kind words he spoke about me.

I take it to be an honour not for me, but for the nearly billion-strong nation, I have the privilege of representing. Indeed, it is an honour that the people of Indian origin in South Africa are conferring upon Mother India.

There are nearly twenty million people of Indian origin living outside India in different parts of the world. The circumstances and reasons that took them beyond Indian shores are varied.

Many of them have lived in their host countries for several generations and become their loyal and productive citizens with equal rights and responsibilities. Nevertheless, all of them experience an unbreakable cultural and spiritual bond that ties them to India.

It is a magical and mystical association with India that I have observed whenever I have visited my sisters and brothers of Indian origin in foreign countries. This observation has always strengthened my own faith and pride in India.

There is, however, something special about the relationship between India and South Africa, as also the relationship between Indians and the people of Indian origin in South Africa. One of the many proud links between our two countries is the work being done under the inspiration of the Arya Samaj.

I was myself deeply influenced by the teachings of the Arya Samaj in my school days. Its insistence on robust nationalism and its philosophy of radical social reform within the framework of India's cultural and spiritual traditions greatly appealed to me.

The book, which I just released, In the Footsteps of Swami Shraddhananda: The Indian-South African Experience, captures for the first time the history of the struggle to establish the Arya Samaj in South Africa against the backdrop of its philosophical roots in India.

Not many people know that Swami Shraddhananda was widely known as a Mahatma, much before Gandhiji returned to India from South Africa. Gandhiji always addressed him as his elder brother. A great Arya Samaji, Swami Shraddhananda treated the struggle against colonial slavery as Dharma Yuddha or holy war and mobilized tens of thousands of people for it. He taught his countrymen to be fearless—a teaching which is

relevant even today.

This book is a welcome addition to the academic struggle to re-appropriate from the erstwhile white ruling class the history of the oppressed people of South Africa. I congratulate the two eminent editors of the book, Dr. Bisram Rambilas and Dr. Ashwin Desai, both from the University of Durban Westville, for their meticulous and devoted research.

Friends, India and South Africa are bound not only by a bitter history of bondage, but also by a brave struggle for freedom and reconstruction which has beneficial lessons for the entire world.

Indeed, part of the reason I am in this enchanting country of yours today is to attend a Summit of my fellow Heads of Government of countries who shared a history of oppression and are today seeking to build a world free of injustice and conflicts. In this noble endeavour, India and South Africa are close and principled partners.

How fascinating it is to recall that some important seeds of India's freedom struggle were sown in South African soil. Mahatma Gandhi discovered the power of Satyagraha first here in this land. Also, inspiring to know that the sons and daughters of those hapless Indians who came here as indentured labourers lend their mite in breaking the back of the dreaded apartheid system in South Africa.

The tapestry of history is made of the small threads of ordinary people doing extraordinary things. But great transformations in history have taken place only when, within the community aspiring for freedom and justice, a group of dedicated people chooses to live and struggle for higher ethical principles. Invariably, such a struggle takes place under adverse conditions and the human spirit is tested to its fullest extent, even calling, for the supreme sacrifice.

India's freedom struggle produced a galaxy of such great men. Most of them looked far beyond political freedom. They were concerned about the all-round regeneration of India, based CC-0. Nanaji Deshmukh Library, BJP, Jammu. Digitized by eGangotri on India's own genius and value system.

Swami Dayanand and the Arya Samaj founded by him were one of the earliest beacons of spiritual nationalism.

It was fortunate that the light emitted by the beacon of the Arya Samaj quickly reached Africa.

The indentured laborers from India who were forcibly brought to South Africa were waging a struggle between one meal and the next. But the Arya Samaj was able to instill in them pride and 'the will to fight against colonial exploitation.

In the years and decades to come, the inspiration ignited by the Samaj served to mobilize the Indian community fully in the broader struggle against apartheid in South Africa.

I am happy to note that the institutions that the Arya Samaj was able to develop in South Africa, such as the Arya Pratinidhi Sabha, are engaged in a wide range of social reform activities.

I congratulate all the volunteers of the Sabha for their spirited work towards eradication of caste and gender discrimination. The initiative to encourage women priests in the community is truly commendable.

Hindi is a language that not only unites people of various regions in India, but it also brings together people of Indian descent in foreign countries.

The popularization of Hindi and its sister Indian languages is essential for preserving the cultural and spiritual moorings of the younger generation of Indians both in India and abroad. I am particularly heartened to know that volunteers of the Hindi Shiksha Sangh are engaged in the promotion of Hindi in South Africa. My Government would keenly assist efforts in this direction in South Africa and other countries.

I also commend the humanitarian work of the Aryan Benevolent Home. Founded seven decades ago, it is today one of the biggest non-governmental welfare organizations providing care for the aged and destitute children all over South Africa.

Friends, the world at the end of the twentieth century is standing at the crossroads. Will humanity advance towards peace, cooperation, and collective progress in the next century, or towards intensification of the kind of conflicts and social schisms that have blighted this century?

How to avoid the path of conflict? And, how to embark on the path of understanding and cooperation?

People all over the world are searching for answers to these questions. The NAM Summit in Durban too will address itself to these concerns.

I would like to express here my belief that the ancient spiritual and cultural heritage of India offers a highly useful repository of ideas and insights in this global search for direction.

The most fundamental truth asserted by India's spiritual heritage is that nations and societies must learn to respect diversity and to live in unity.

The need to wholeheartedly accept the imperative of "Unity in Diversity" and "Diversity in Unity" is all the greater in multifaith and multi-ethnic societies like India and South Africa.

This imperative is also becoming more and more pronounced at the international level with the rapid march of globalization, which is bringing countries, cultures, and communities into closer interaction and interdependence than ever before.

In this context, I am reminded of what your universally respected President Mr. Nelson Mandela said at a rally of the World Hindu Conference on July 9, 1995. I quote, "Hinduism . . . is a vision based on tolerance and unity and equitable distribution of resources, on peace and friendship in this our South African nation, and between the nations of the world."

It is a vision such as was found in the values that Mahatma Gandhi pronounced in South Africa and elsewhere, Swami Vivekananda espoused at his famous Chicago Convention, CC-0. Nanaji Deshmukh Library, BJP, Jammu. Digitized by eGangotri values that had a lasting influence on our liberation movement and on my own thinking.

President Mandela's words capture a basic truth not only about Hinduism, but also about the Indian tradition as a whole. The Arya Samaj is an important part of this tradition.

I once again congratulate all the volunteers involved in this noble mission and wish them continued success in the future.

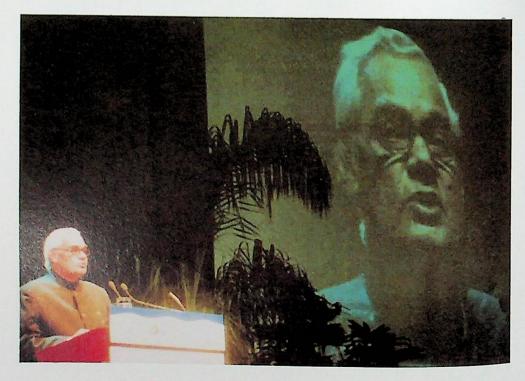
#### Collective Action for Common Good

As a Figure who has played a historic role in the 20th century, it is fitting and a matter of pride that Nelson Mandela will guide the destinies of the Movement now. We wish our South African friends every success in their stewardship of our Movement and offer our fullest cooperation to them. This would be our tribute to South Africa, for it was here that Mohandas Karamchand Gandhi emerged from the shadows of obscurity to become the Mahatma who is today a beacon of hope to humankind. This is also our last summit this century that has seen much bloodshed and suffering. It is up to us, representing the majority of the people of this world, to ensure that the next century is one of peace and prosperity.

For much of this century, South Africa has dominated the agenda of the Non-Aligned Movement (NAM) as a victim of political and social repression. It is in the fitness of things that the wheel of history has turned full circle and South Africa will

now lead the movement into the next century as a multi-racial democracy. India will fully cooperate with South Africa to revitalize the agenda of NAM. At this summit and the ensuing years of South Africa's chairmanship, the movement should formulate a focussed strategy to articulate the concerns of the developing countries to address the challenges of the 21st century. This would be a crowning achievement for South Africa and the Non-Aligned Movement (NAM).

Since India emerged as a free country in 1947, disarmament has remained a cornerstone of our foreign policy. Our leaders saw it as a natural course for a country that had waged a unique struggle for independence on the basis of ahimsa and saṭyagraha. A nuclear weapon-free world, they reasoned, would enhance the security of all nations. This conviction remains as strong today as it was in 1954 when India raised the call for



Prime Minister Shri Atal Bihari Vajpayee speaking at the NAM Summit, Durban, 3 September 1998

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"negotiations for prohibition and elimination of nuclear weapons and in the interim, a standstill agreement to halt nuclear testing". The goal was a ban that would stop nuclear weapons research and development. This goal still eludes us. The Partial Test Ban Treaty of 1963 drove testing underground. The so-called Comprehensive Test Ban Treaty of 1996 is also another partial test ban treaty, which allows states possessing nuclear weapons to continue to refine and improve their arsenals.

Our position on the Non-Proliferation Treaty (NPT) is well known and has been consistent since the Treaty was first proposed. It is a discriminatory treaty and has not served the purpose of non-proliferation but has given the right to five countries to proliferate vertically in disregard of universal opinion against the very existence of nuclear weapons. The commitment undertaken by the nuclear weapon states to work for general and complete disarmament has been disregarded completely. Even the undertaking to prevent the transfer of nuclear materials and technology has not been adhered to.

At the first special session of the UN General Assembly devoted to disarmament in 1978, India moved a resolution along with a number of other Non-Aligned nations, declaring that the use of nuclear weapons be considered a crime against humanity. The second special session of the General Assembly in 1982 strengthened this with a draft Convention on the non-use of nuclear weapons. Even today, five nuclear weapon states and their allies continue to oppose this resolution in the United Nations General Assembly. They also recently opposed the Indian proposal that the use of nuclear weapons should be included in the list of war crimes falling within the jurisdiction of the proposed International Criminal Court.

During the 1980s, when there was increased concern about a re-emergence of the nuclear arms race, India, along with Sweden, Greece, Mexico, Argentina and Tanzania, launched a Six-nation Five-continent Initiative which once again focussed on the banning of all nuclear tests, a ban that would be a meaningful step towards disarmament. The two leading nuclear

weapon states remained opposed to this appeal.

In 1988, at the third special session of the UN General Assembly on disarmament, India put forward an Action Plan for the establishment of a nuclear weapon-free and non-violent world order. It was a phased plan that envisaged a step-bystep approach, leading to the verifiable elimination of all nuclear arsenals. This, unfortunately, was dismissed by the nuclear weapon states as utopian. Many of us supported the call for the amendment of the Partial Test Ban Treaty into a Comprehensive Test Ban Treaty (CTBT) launched by Mexico. India was one of the countries that also took the lead in deposing before the International Court of Justice (ICJ) in 1995 which led to the historic opinion of the ICJ a year later, on the illegality of the threat or use of nuclear weapons. We have welcomed the ICJ affirmation that there exists an obligation to pursue in good faith and bring to a conclusion negotiations leading to nuclear disarmament in all aspects under strict and effective international control.

Since the first summit in 1961, our Movement has registered many achievements to its credit. But on the issue of global nuclear disarmament, which was identified as a priority by our leaders in 1961, we have yet to make a decisive headway. With the end of the cold war, we are convinced that there is a window of opportunity that needs to be exploited. Many sections of the international community are now re-evaluating their earlier positions and becoming convinced of the merits of a phased approach for nuclear disarmament which they considered too idealistic in 1988. The Canberra Commission on the Elimination of Nuclear Weapons declared that "the opportunity now exists, perhaps without precedent or recurrence, to make a new and clear choice to enable the world to conduct its affairs without nuclear weapons".

Many others are realizing that the nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty (NPT) cannot provide a lasting and genuine solution to the problem of proliferation. It is vital for our movement, at this juncture, to renew our commitment to the goal of a nuclear weapon free world and take advantage of this environment.

Many of us have called, on the basis of the document adopted at the Cartagena Summit, for multilateral negotiations leading to an early conclusion of a Nuclear Weapons Convention (NWC) prohibiting the development, production, testing, deployment, stockpiling transfer, threat or use of nuclear weapons and providing for their elimination.

India's recent nuclear tests took place in a geo-political environment where our security was becoming ever more threatened by the overt and covert nuclearization of our neighbourhood. We do not, however, believe now, any more than we ever did before, that nuclear weapons are here to stay. On the contrary, if the established nuclear weapon states agree to negotiations to abolish nuclear weapons, we will be the first to join. Today, I urge them, as India has urged them so many times before, to join us in the Non-Aligned Movement (NAM) in negotiating a Nuclear Weapons Convention (NWC), through which we can eliminate this last category of weapons of mass destruction. This movement, in keeping with its longstanding commitment, is issuing a historic call today for safeguarding our future. Let, us pledge that when we assemble at the next summit in 2001, it will be able to welcome the collective decision that nuclear weapons shall not cast their shadow into the new millennium.

Apprehensions have been expressed in some quarters that recent developments in South Asia raise the spectre of an arms race and heightened tensions. These apprehensions are misplaced. India continues to seek good relations with all its neighbours and to work with them to build on our commonalities and shared aspirations. Differences should be resolved in a rational manner, peacefully and through bilateral negotiations. I have had a cordial meeting with the Prime Minister of Pakistan at Colombo and our delegations have continued the dialogue here. This is not the place to air the differences in some of our positions. The Shimla Agreement, which both India and Pakistan have ratified, provides an agreed mechanism for resolving these differences amicably among ourselves. Let me say this loud and clear: there is no place for

any third party involvement in this process, howsoever well intentioned. The State of Jammu & Kashmir is, and will remain, an integral part of India. The real problems there is one of cross-border terrorism.

The international system in which the Movement must function remains beset with inequality and uncertainty. Ethnic conflict continues in Europe as well as other parts of the world. The Middle East Peace Process remains deadlocked. Religious fundamentalism and terrorism daily claim innocent victims in many parts of the world. Protectionism, currency speculation and flight of capital have been a setback to the economies of many developing countries. Pressures on developing countries have intensified as the new architecture of the multilateral regime in trade, investment, development, cooperation, environment and human rights shrinks the political space available to developing countries. The United Nations is being asked to shoulder increasing responsibilities but its financial resources rest on shaky foundations. Expansion and reform of the Security Council should be based on global and nondiscriminatory criteria. NAM and developing countries are most often the objects of the council's actions; they must have a role in decision making in the council on the basis of equality. To meet the aspirations of its members, NAM has to develop the strength to translate its numbers into an effective voice in international affairs. It has to regain lost ground in a changed international environment.

Another priority should be to set an agenda for the management of the international economy. Protectionism has returned in markets of the developed world; trade and investment are being increasingly used to promote political objectives, on labour standards, intellectual property rights, human rights and the environment. These are defences thrown up against the recent successes of some developing countries. These members of our Movement have emerged in the vanguard of international growth, but others have not only been economically marginalized by globalization, even the stability of their societies is threatened. In either case, our voice must be

heard. Instead, we have heard *ad nauseam* that we should trust the magic of the market place. We have discovered the hard way that the magic wears off fast. And in each country, the market place has to be run according to rules, which that country must determine as the only guardian of the well being of its people.

But, we are told, the global market place will be anarchic, subject to no control, a place of mystery where the managers of investment funds can bring down an economy, almost at whim. The lesson that we have been asked to learn from the South East Asian experience is that there must be firmer domestic controls on financial institutions in developing countries. But there is no agenda set to bring international controls or accountability to the international marketplace, or to examine the systemic flaws in the architecture of the international financial and monetary system, or the havoc it plays on all vital aspects of the economy.

The Movement needs to be far more active than it has so far been. The ad hoc panel of economists which we set up last year has produced a report; several important meetings have been held in recent months at the United Nations to ponder the implications of the crises. As recent events have shown, economic crisis lead to political tensions; they tear at the social fabric of our countries. The crisis which started in East Asia will not end there; all of us will be touched by it. We must, therefore, take decisions at our level to guide our actions in an uncertain world; we must set up a system through which the non-aligned can work continuously on the critical economic issues of our day. If the Non-Aligned Movement (NAM) does not shape the future of the international economy through continuous attention, it is we who will suffer most from the consequences of this neglect. We must demonstrate the political will to see this through together, no matter how hard the negotiations, and we must take substantive decisions at this Summit to be better served in strengthening our analytical resources, negotiation capacity and mutually supportive action in a variety of ways, taking advantage of the substantial capabilities we have built up among ourselves.

The current international economic environment, characterized by shrinking Official Development Assistance (ODA) flows, especially those channelized through multilateral organizations, causes serious concern. The central role of these bodies, especially the UN, in promoting international cooperation for development, must be strengthened. Ways must be devised to make decision-making in international financial and trade institutions equitable and more responsive to our requirements. The developmental focus of their activities needs to be restored. The International Conference on Finance for Development (ICFD), a longstanding demand of the Movement, will be a significant step in the attainment of these objectives. Effective participation of the members of this movement in the preparatory process is imperative for insuring its success.

The exponential increase in the capacities of our countries, developed through our unremitting efforts, have not only improved the conditions of our people but have opened new vistas for South-South cooperation. We must build on the existing complementarities, and also endeavour to build new ones. In the ultimate analysis, there in no alternative to self-reliance.

Another area, which merits greater attention is Africa which has not had the consideration this continent deserves. The Secretary General of the United Nations produced a report a few months ago, which the Security Council looked at but the roots of crisis can only be addressed in other forums and by other means. The Economic and Social Council will shortly be adopting a decision to focus on Africa in 1999. Our hosts have some ideas of their own; so, too, do other African States. The Movement should work with them if they think that we have something to offer to support the initiatives taken by Africans themselves. They could examine the usefulness of an international conference or a Special Session of the UN General Assembly to focus on the special needs of Africa.

The entire purpose of development for us is to restore to our citizens the human rights that colonialism trampled upon. These rights are still under constant threat from poverty, social

backwardness and racial and other forms of discrimination. It is, therefore, ironic that the Non-Aligned are sometimes seen as being defensive on human rights. Perhaps this is because we do not accept partial and self serving approaches that ignore the international obligations and cooperation that are necessary for their full enjoyment, in particular for the realization of economic, social and cultural rights. In this, the 50th year of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, it is important that the Movement work for a deeper understanding of the relationship between democracy, development, human rights and international cooperation.

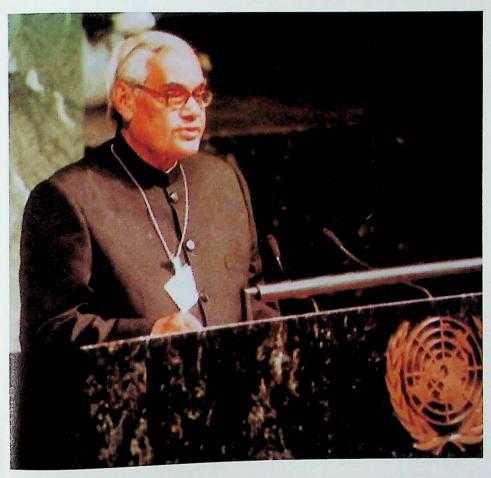
The scourge of terrorism is spreading its tentacles and knows no frontiers. A month ago, innocent lives were lost in Nairobi and Dar-Es-Salaam in violence of the utmost malignancy. Those acts of terrorism made the headlines, but several of our countries are no strangers to terrorist outrages, with the rest of the world either silent or indifferent, unable to agree, for reasons of political convenience or worse, on a definition of terrorism which ought to be a straightforward matter. Some, with myopic loftiness, are far too willing to judge democracies on the same scale on which they place the terrorists who batten on open societies. Terrorism is a plain, naked assault on humanity and the values that civilized societies live by. If we honour Gandhi's legacy, and Madiba's example, the Non-Aligned must reject the false claim of moral equivalence. Evil cannot be equated with good; there is a just fight against "adharma", against evil, that must be fought. This cannot be done by unilateral or selective action. It calls for concerted international effort. The time has come for an international conference to discuss and agree on measures to combat and defeat this menace through collective action. Let us not waste our time squabbling over the fine print in the final document. Poverty is real, discrimination is real, violence is real; these are the realities that claim the lives of our citizens. The Movement must grapple with these realities, and not be content with sterile debate over definitions. Collective action for common good was what the Non-Aligned Movement (NAM) was created for. Under your Chairmanship that is what we must do. We hope

the Durban Summit will be the beginning of an African renaissance, to which the NAM would have contributed and which will strengthen the movement.

## India's Commitment to Global Nuclear Disarmament

FIRST ADDRESSED this august Assembly of the UN as Foreign Minister in 1977. Since then I have had the privilege to come for the General Assembly sessions for many years but it was without ministerial responsibility. I acknowledge with gratitude the confidence of successive Prime Ministers. To me it also signifies the consensus on national interests and the foreign policy of India. When I addressed the General Assembly in 1977, it was the turning point in many ways in the history of India. The Janata Government was a coalition of many factions who united in the restoration of our people's faith in democracy. Since then we have had many changes of Government but the people's political awareness and their faith in the institutions which uphold our constitutional system has been unwavering. Today, when I come to this podium as Prime Minister I come on behalf of another coalition. India has demonstrated that democracy can take root in a developing country. I am confident that the Indian experience will prove that democracy can also provide the basis for stable, long-term economic growth in developing societies. This is the path that the people of India have chosen and I stand before you today as the symbol of this new resurgent India.

Free rendering of the speech in Hindi at the UN General Assembly, New York, 24 September 1998 CC-0. Nanaji Deshmukh Library, BJP, Jammu. Digitized by eGangotri The world of the 1970's has receded into history. The shackling constraints of the Cold War are gone. The distinguishing feature of the last two decades has been the spread of democracy world-wide. By force of example, we have been one of the authors of the triumph of democracy. From this flows our desire to see democratisation of the UN itself. An international body that does not reflect, and change with, the changing international realities, will inevitably face a credibility deficit. We, therefore, support a revitalized and effective UN, one that is more responsive to the concerns of the vast majority



Prime Minister Shri Atal Bihari Vajpayee speaking at the UN General Assembly, New York, 24 September 1998

of its member States and is better equipped to meet the challenges ahead of us in the 21st century.

The Security Council does not represent contemporary reality; it does not represent democracy in international relations. Following the end of the Cold War, it has acquired the freedom to act but experience shows that the Council has acted only when it was convenient for its permanent members. The experience of Somalia does not do credit to the Security Council and there are other examples too. Peace-keeping operations cannot be a reflection of ulterior political priorities and perceptions.

There is only one cure to bring in fresh blood. The Security Council must be made representative of the membership of the United Nations. Developing countries must be made permanent members. It is a right to which the developing world is entitled.

Presence of some developing countries as permanent members is inescapable for effectively discharging the responsibilities of the Security Council particularly when we see that the Council acts almost exclusively in the developing world. It is only natural that on decisions affecting the developing world, these countries have a say, on equal terms. Along with other measures, the Security Council too must be reformed, expanding its non-permanent membership so that more developing countries can serve on it. But this alone is not enough. Because as long as effective power in the Council rests with the permanent membership, the interests of the developing world will not be promoted or protected unless developing countries are made permanent members, on par with the present permanent members. Only this will make the Council an effective instrument for the international community on dealing with current and future challenges. The new permanent members must of course have the ability to discharge the responsibilities that come with permanent membership. India believes it can, and, as we had said before from this rostrum, we are prepared to accept the responsibilities of permanent membership, and we believe we are qualified for it.

It will be a great day when democracy becomes the CC-0. Nanaji Deshmukh Library, BJP, Jammu. Digitized by eGangotri

universal norm and when the UN reflects this democracy in its institutions and functioning. However, open democratic societies have one scourge to contend with—terrorism. The challenge before countries like mine and other democracies is to maintain our openness, safeguard individual rights, and, at the same time, give no quarter to terrorists. Several speakers before me have recounted the terrible toll, world-wide, that terrorists have exacted, taking advantage of the trust that characterises open societies. I recall that G-7 Summit almost two decades back had identified terrorism as one of the most serious threats to civilized societies. Events since then including the blowing up of Air India Kanishka, the Pan Am Airlines over Lockerbie, to the recent bombings in Nairobi and Dar-es-Salaam have only established the correctness of that judgement.

Terrorism is one threat that affects us all equally. Terrorism takes a daily toll across the world. It is the most vicious among international crimes, the most pervasive, pernicious and ruthless threat to the lives of men and women in open societies, and to international peace and security. In India, we have had to cope with terrorism, aided and abetted by a neighbouring country, for nearly two decades. We have borne this with patience, but none should doubt the strength of our resolve to crush this challenge. Its tentacles have spread across the world. Today, it has linkages with illicit trade in drugs, arms and money laundering. In short, terrorism has gone global and it can only be defeated by organized international action.

Let us make up our minds once and for all—terrorism is a crime against humanity. Unilateral steps can hardly stand scrutiny in an open society, let alone in the eyes of the international community. It should be the primary task of all open and plural societies to develop collective means for tackling this menace. At the summit meetings in Durban, the Non-Aligned Movement has called for an international conference in 1999 to develop such a collective response. We urge that the 1999 conference launch the process of negotiations for an international convention to provide for collective action against States and organizations which initiate or aid and abet terrorism.

In this fiftieth anniversary of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, there is a growing realization that economic, social, cultural, civil and political rights form a seamless web. Analyses carried out in recent years by the UN High Commissioner for Refugees amply reflect the vicious cycle of how violations of economic, social and cultural rights inevitably lead to violations of civil and political rights. In defining its index, the Human Development Report gives a higher weightage to economic criterion for developing countries; this weightage is reduced for developed countries, highlighting the importance of the right to development for developing societies. It is therefore a matter of concern that the absolutism sought to be advocated in the promotion of human rights is often at the cost of the right to development.

India has ratified both the Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights and the Covenant of Civil and Political Rights. Other institutions in our country—the National Human Rights Commission, a free media, an independent judiciary—all serve to assure that the international human rights statutes are enjoyed by all citizens. We also remained convinced that unless progress is made on economic, social and cultural rights including the right to development, the world will continue to witness international conflict leading to migrations, displacement of people and human rights abuses.

In the closing years of the 20th century, the challenge of nuclear disarmament is another of the priorities facing the international community. We have successfully prohibited chemical and biological weapons in recent decades. The present century has witnessed the development and the tragic use of nuclear weapons. We must ensure that the legacy of this weapon of mass destruction is not carried into the next century.

For the last half-century, India has consistently pursued the objectives of international peace along with equal and legitimate security for all through global disarmament. These concepts are among the basic tenets of our national security. India has, over the years, sought to enhance its national security by promoting global nuclear disarmament, convinced that a

world free of nuclear weapons enhances both global and india's national security.

The negotiations on a Comprehensive Test Ban Treaty (CTBT) began in 1993 with a mandate that such a treaty would contribute effectively to the non-proliferation of nuclear weapons in all aspects, to the process of nuclear disarmament and, therefore, to the enhancement of international peace and security. India participated, actively and constructively in the negotiations and sought to place the Treaty in a disarmament framework by proposing its linkage with a time-bound programme for the universal elimination of all nuclear weapons.

It is a matter of history that India's proposals were not accepted. The treaty, as it emerged, was not accepted by India on grounds of national security. We made explicit our objection that despite our stand having been made clear, the treaty text made India's signature and ratification a pre-condition for its entry into force.

Mindful of its deteriorating security enviornment which has obliged us to stand apart from the CTBT in 1996, India undertook a limited series of five underground tests, conducted on 11 and 13 May, 1998. These tests were essential for ensuring a credible nuclear deterrent for india's national security in the foreseeable future.

These tests do not signal a dilution of india's commitment to the pursuit of global nuclear disarmament. Accordingly, after concluding this limited testing programme, India announced a voluntary moratorium on further underground nuclear test explosions. We conveyed our willingness to move towards a de jure formalization of this obligation. In announcing a moratorium, India has already accepted the basic obligation of CTBT. In 1996, India could not have accepted the obligation as such a restraint would have eroded our capability and compromised our national security.

India, having harmonized its national imperatives and security obligations and desirous of continuing to cooperate with the international community is now engaged in discus-

sions with key interlocutors on a range of issues, including the CTBT. We are prepared to bring these discussions to a successful conclusion, so that the entry into force of the CTBT is not delayed beyond September 1999. We expect that other countries, as indicated in Article XIV of the CTBT, will adhere to this Treaty without conditions.

After protracted discussions, the Conference on Disarmament in Geneva is now in a position to begin negotiations on a treaty that will prohibit the production of fissile materials for nuclear weapons or other nuclear explosive devices. Once again, we are conscious that this is a partial step. Such a treaty, as and when it is concluded and enters into force, will not eliminate existing nuclear arsenals. Yet, we will participate in these negotiations in good faith in order to ensure a treaty that is non-discriminatory and meets India's security imperatives. India will pay serious attentions to any other multilateral initiatives in this area, during the course of the negotiations in the Conference on Disarmament.

As a responsible state committed to non-proliferation, India has undertaken that it shall not transfer these weapons or related know-how to other countries. We have an effective system of export controls and shall make it more stringent where necessary, including by expanding control lists of equipment and technology to make them more contemporary and effective in the context of a nuclear India. At the same time, as a developing country, we are conscious that nuclear technology has a number of peaceful applications and we shall continue to cooperative actively with other countries in this regard, in keeping with our international responsibilities.

A few weeks ago, at the Non-Aligned Summit in Durban, India proposed and the Movement agreed that an international conference be held, preferably in 1999, with the objective of arriving at an agreement, before the end of this millennium on a phased programme for complete elimination of all nuclear weapons. I call upon all members of the international community, and particularly the other nuclear weapon States to join in this endeavour. Let us pledge that when we assemble

here in the new millennium, it shall be to welcome the commitment that mankind shall never again be subjected to the use or threat of use of nuclear weapons.

The decade of the 1990s has fallen far short of expectations; nowhere is this more apparent than on the global economic sence. The sense of triumphalism that heralded the wave of global capitalism is now giving way to caution and realism. What was initially seen as an Asian flu is now spreading to other continents.

The hypothesis that unfettered capital flows would foster economic development with the global financial markets adjusting the exchange rates stands falsified. What we have seen is the growth of a large volume of "virtual money" that has not been generated by productive economic activity. But the power of the "virtual money" is real, evident in the fact that national regulatory mechanisms are unable to cope with the impact of its rapid movement in and out of currencies. Its volatility in the short run does not follow economic logic but rumour and sentiment, with results that are self-reinforcing. In developing countries and in western financial capitals, there is now a growing acceptance that premature liberalisation of capital markets has been a primaly cause of the current crisis.

Does it mean that the world should turn back from globalization? Our answer is an emphatic 'no'. Rising economic inter-dependence is a phenomenon driven by the technological imperative, but we must learn how to manage the change. India has not been affected as severely as some other countries, largely because we adopted policies that were more prudent. But a drop in commodity prices by 30 per cent in a year and a reduction in net capital flows by 50 per cent to the emerging markets will have a negative impact on growth everywhere, including in the developed world.

I must emphasise that democratically elected leadership in open developing societies, such as India, also faces another challenge. We cannot let an unbridled free market system aggravate existing economic and social disparities. In fact, we need policy instruments to reduce disparities thus creating a more stable environment in the long term. Such policies are necessary in accountable democracies and in no way inconsistent with managed liberalisation.

It is high time that we begin a new international dialogue, on the future of a global and inter-dependent economy. This is a task for the sovereign states represented here and cannot be left solely to the dynamics of an unregulated market place.

I think I speak for all of us when I say that we are on the threshold of a new age. This is an over-used phrase, but we are all aware that an exciting new universe is within our reach. Several centuries ago, Issac Newton described his scientific discoveries as pebbles on the beach, while the Ocean of Truth lay undiscovered. It was modest of that great scientist to so describe his work, but I believe that we are now actually sailing in the Ocean of Truth. We have made exciting discoveries and will make many more which will move humankind forward.

And yet, there is also an uneasy feeling that all is not well. The world is not at ease with itself. Forces are bubbling under the surface tranquility in almost all parts of the world that threaten the gains of the last century and which seek to lead the world towards bigotry, violence and unhealthy exclusivism.

India has a message: not a new one, for almost all religions have expressed the thought before. But we have preserved the tenets—of freedom, equality and tolerance in ourdaily lives. If the world of the 21st century is to be a better place than the world we have seen so far, these values must prevail. History also shows that these are easier to prescribe than to observe. And yet, as we move towards ever-closer interdependence, there is no alternative. The world and its leaders must summon the will to rise to the occasion and enter the new age with a new outlook. This is the task before us and I declare India's readiness to make its full contribution in the testing times ahead.

I close with an ancient sloka from the Rig Veda composed thousands of years ago in Sanskrit, the oldest language in the world:

स्वस्तिर्मानुषेभ्य:। उर्ध्वं जिगातु भेषजम। शं नो अस्तु द्विषदे। शं चतुष्पदे। ओं शांति: शांति: शांति:॥

#### Meaning:

Let all human beings be blessed with prosperity.

Let all flora and fauna which are life line of all creatures grow abundantly,

Let there be harmony with all two-legged creations.

Let there be harmony with all four-legged creations.

Let there be peace, peace, peace.

### NRIs—India's True Ambassadors

 ${f I}$  AM HAPPY to be with you this evening. It's like being at home away from home.

Not only am I getting to meet my country's brethren; but I am also meeting some of the top representatives of the Indian community in the United States, who by dint of hard work and intelligence have reached the top of their respective professions.

This evening's function has been organized, so I am told, to felicitate me. Rather, I take it to be an occasion for me to felicitate you. And I have many good reasons for doing so.

Whenever I meet Indians living and working abroad, I feel

Speech at the gathering of members of the Indian Community, New York, 26 September 1998

proud and my confidence in the destiny of India gets strengthened. Your achievements around the world show what Indians are capable of.

Be it in business, management, scientific research, medicine or skill-based technical professions, Indians have earned a name for themselves in whichever country they have chosen to work in.

In so doing, you have created wealth for yourselves and your families. You have brought valuable foreign exchange for the country; the recent stupendous success of the Resurgent India Bonds is an indication of your readiness to strengthen India's forex reserves at a time of need. This shows your patriotism.

Most importantly, you have earned a positive reputation for your mother nation in your host nation.

Your professional competence, your positive work culture, and your ability to harmonize with any socio-cultural environment without losing your own cultural moorings endear you to diverse communities. In the Global Village that we live in today, multi-culturism has become one of the critical assets for sustained growth.

I felicitate you for another reason. I am told that the gathering here consists of representatives of a number of Indian associations in the USA. The diversity that I see here is indeed a mirror to the diversity that is the hallmark of Indian society.

But you mirror not only India's diversity, but also her unbreakable, underlying unity. You belong to different regions of India, profess different religions and speak different mother tongues. You may even have different political beliefs.

But none of these differences matter when you are called upon to speak for India.

I am happy to recall here the strong support we received from you when India conducted the nuclear tests in May. Our decision was dictated by considerations of national defence. Additionally, we also see it as a catalyst for global nuclear disarmament. India has always been a votary of peace. She shall continue to serve this mission with renewed strength and self-confidence.

It is heartening to note that, after initial reservations, more and more people in the USA and the West have begun to appreciate India's point of view. I must acknowledge here that you people have made a significant contribution to transforming the world's—and especially America's—perception of India's newly-acquired nuclear capability.

In an era when people-to-people diplomacy has become an extremely effective vehicle for forging friendly relations with foreign countries, you have truly been serving as India's unofficial ambassadors abroad.

As envoys, I am sure you would be as keenly interested in knowing what is happening in India as the rest of the world is.

Friends, the world we live in has been changing rapidly and dramatically; and so is India. I am myself a symbol and a product of the change that Indian society and polity has been undergoing. I now head our country's first non-Congress Government at the Centre. Although the Bharatiya Janata Party heads the ruling coalition, it shares power with a large number of parties.

This is a totally new experiment in Indian politics. But it can be said to the credit of Indian democracy that every experiment it has done in recent years has been peaceful and entirely within the framework of the Constitution. We have even been able to restore popular rule in the troubled state of Jammu & Kashmir through peaceful, democratic means.

This speaks eloquently about the maturity of Indian democracy. I urge you to propagate this fact effectively in the United States, whose people, institutions and the media have a deep faith in democracy.

There is another fact about which both you and the key constituents of American society must know. It is India's—and my own Government's—commitment to secularism. India was,

is and will always remain a secular nation in which all faiths receive equal respect and treatment and the State itself shall not be run according to the tenets of any single faith.

This is what we mean by Sarva Pantha Samabhaava. Our nationalism encompasses all religions, because our culture embraces all religions.

I have often stated that secularism, understood in this uniquely Indian sense, is received by us through mother's milk. My Government is fully committed to protecting communal harmony and the interests of minorities. Let there be no scope for any apprehension or motivated propaganda on this score.

Similarly, India's commitment to economic reforms is something that does not change with the change of Government. It is irreversible. My Government is determined to broaden, deepen and further strengthen the reform process.

We see the private sector as a valuable partner. My Government will do everything necessary to facilitate and accelerate the economic process to achieve an annual GDP growth rate of 7 to 8 per cent. You know that recently we have created a platform at the highest level of the Government for intensive and sustained interaction between policy makers and eminent representatives of business and industry.

This is part of a series of initiatives we shall take to send out a powerful signal that India is a good place to invest in and to do business in.

I would hasten to add here that in continuing with our reforms process, we would be guided by two important considerations. First, we want growth with employment and equity—and not jobless growth, which widens the gap between the rich and the poor.

To change the lot of the poorest, the most powerless and the most deprived Indian, and to achieve this goal in the shortest period of time—this is the historic task before any Government that seeks to rule India. It is naturally the foremost task before my Government. Secondly, even as we welcome higher quantum of foreign investments and greater integration with the world economy, we shall do so by being guided by our national interests. You know that India is one of the few countries which has remained relatively immune to the economic turmoil that has destablized many Asian economies.

The experience of the crisis in the Asian markets, which is having its ripple effects elsewhere, clearly shows that the global financial system itself is in need of a major restructuring. I would like India's experience to make a positive contribution to this global effort of reforming the reform process.

Friends, what role do I see for the non-resident Indian community in the great *Yagnya* of India's economic transformation that we have undertaken? Frankly, a very important role.

We see your experience, your expertise, your knowledge base and the investible surplus at your command as constituting one of India's most precious national resources. We would like to create supportive conditions within India, which would enthuse your and enable you to bring these resources into the country on a mutually profitable basis. We will simplify rules and procedures and make them transparent. We will cut delays, for we want you to succeed.

After all, if you can succeed so spectacularly in a foreign land, why shouldn't you succeed equally spectacularly in your own motherland?

Friends, I know that one of the major areas of your success in the United States has been information technology and other knowledge-based enterprises. Our Government has decided to give a major boost to information technology with the ultimate aim of making India an IT superpower.

A National Task Force has been set up for this purpose. It has produced an excellent report, on the basis of which we have been taking a number of far-reaching initiatives in the field of software exports, hardware design and manufacturing,

telecom infrastructure, widening Internet access, computer education and R & D.

There is a virtual competition between States and cities in attracting new investments and businesses. This, in my view, provides an ideal operating system for IT professionals and businessmen in the United States to log in—if I may be permitted to use computer terminology.

Perhaps the most visible contribution you can make is to the success of 'Operation Knowledge', the national campaign to provide universal computer education.

We will reach this goal faster if each of you chooses to adopt a school or a college in your native village or town back in India to donate computers and provide computer education facilities. You could do so on your own or through the large network of service-oriented NGOs in India.

Friends, I said you make me feel at home away from home. I said you make me feel confident of India's destiny. As I speak these words to you, standing on the soil of a nation which has dominated this century, I clearly see a great future beckoning Indian in the 21st century. For ours is a nation on the ascendant. We have the economic potential and civilizational resources to emerge as a strong, prosperous and benign global power.

Of course, we have many daunting problems back home and I have no wish to present a rosy picture. But we shall overcome those problems—unitedly as one nation and as one people. In this historic endeavour, in this nationalistic endeavour, I invite all of you, my Indian sisters and brothers in the United States and in all the other countries of the world, to add strength to our unity and to our resolve.

Together, we shall succeed.

## India and the United States are Natural Allies

It IS A great honour for me to be invited today to speak at this renowned institution. Its well-deserve fame is the result of many years of sustained and dedicated work by some of the most eminent minds of the United States of America.

The Asia Society has provided a forum for the East and the West to meet and, on many occasions, for India and the USA to meet.

As all of us know through experience, the most productive meetings between nations are often those that take place outside the formal framework of diplomacy and summitry. It is when political leaders, intellectuals, and policy makers of two or more countries meet and interact in informal and friendly settings that trust develops and understanding deepens.

I would, therefore, at the outset like to compliment the Asia Society for its excellent work in the field of what is called popular diplomacy.

Friends, this is my first visit to the USA after assuming the office of the Prime Minister of India.

In March this year we completed what have been described as the largest elections in the history of the world, with an electorate of over 600 million people. To Indians today, the vast majority of whom were born in freedom, democracy is the natural and the only acceptable form of governance.

This very fact characterizes the remarkable journey that India has traveled in fifty years during which India has remained true to its values, and has succeeded in knitting together its many diversities into a strong, coherent, and pluralistic society.

Despite changes in government, the political system itself has remained remarkably stable. This testifies to the inherent strength and stability of democratic traditions in India.

India's commitment to democratic pluralism is also reflected in the Government, which I head. Ours is a coalition Government led by the Bharatiya Janata Party. We have prepared a common programme, which defines the National Agenda for Governance. We are convinced that maturing of coalition politics is what India needs at the present juncture.

Our objective is clear: to build a strong, prosperous, and self-confident India, which occupies its rightful place in the comity of nations.

We know what India has, what it takes to achieve far higher—7 to 8 per cent rate of annual GDP growth. We know that India has what it takes to emerge as a major manufacturing, trading, and exporting power, by achieving global competitiveness in cost and quality.

We also know that faster economic growth is the key to overcoming the historical legacy of unemployment and material backwardness afflicting large sections of our population.

We are fully aware of the problems that lie in the path of achieving these goals. However, we are also convinced that we can make light of these problems if we act in the national interest in all matters.

Personally speaking, I have always held the national interest above party and personal interest. This is the pledge I made to the people of India on August 15, in the concluding celebrations of India's Fiftieth Anniversary of Independence. It is a pledge that I am determined to honour.

In my lecture before this august audience today, I wish to talk about both India and the world standing expectantly on the threshold of the 21st century. I do so from an Indian point of view. But I make bold to claim that the Indian point of view is broad enough to command respectful attention of every progressive opinion in America and the world.

The 20th century has been a time of unprecedented changes. The scale and newness of changes in this century have far surpassed anything recorded in known history of mankind. Of this century can it be truly said that "it was the best of times and it was the worst of times".

It has been a century of world wars and conflicts, of stockpiling of weapons of mass destruction, of colonialism, hegemonies, terrorism, and religious fanaticism.

At the same time, it has also been a century of freedom, relative peace, prosperity, advance of democracy, spectacular progress in science and technology, especially the recent advances in information and communication technology, and unprecedented levels of global cooperation.

The challenge before the world is how can the worst features of this century be held in check, reversed and their non-recurrence ensured? The challenge also is how can we better the best features of the 20th century for the benefit of all sections of humanity—and not just some select, privileged nations and classes, as has happened so far?

Will the new century be really new for humanity, or will it be a continuation of the old problems and crises and conflicts that we have seen in our times?

Will the world move decisively in the direction of peace and disarmament? Will mass poverty, undernourishment and starvation be things of the past? Will the world financial system become less volatile and more predictable? And will there be a just and equitable global economic order?

Will we be able to overcome terrorism, ethnic strife and religious hatred in the coming century?

These are the questions that confront the leaders of the world in the twilight days of the 20th century. By leaders I do not mean only heads of government. No. History has thrown this challenge before all of us—leaders in government, politics, business, international agencies, academic institutions, media, and cultural organizations. Will we be able to rise to the occasion?

Today, India, USA and the world stand at a unique moment in history. As we peer into the future, we find that it is not so far away at all. In less than 500 days, we will leave the 20th century behind, the second millennium behind and enter into a new century and a new millennium.

As we all know, computer professional around the world are busy grappling with what is famously called the Y2K problem. The problem basically is to re-programme the software to let the computers know that the Year 2000 has begun. Computers will behave funnily and totally unreliably if the Y2K problem is not solved.

Drawing from the computer terminology, let me pose the question: Have we—the political leaders, heads of government, policy makers, and intellectuals of the world—begun to reprogramme our political and economic minds to take the note of the fact that we are all soon going to enter a new era? I call this the PE-Y2K—the Political Economic Year 2000—problem.

Friends, in order to successfully meet this challenge, leaders around the world need a new mindset. And the mindset necessary to sustain the world.

The 21<sup>st</sup> century demands that all of us must first learn the lesson of this century—that peace is the highest ideal. The 20<sup>th</sup> century witnessed two World Wars, each more ferocious than all the previous wars. The price humanity paid in these two global conflicts has been so frightening that the option before the world today is stark: another world war, which will be a nuclear war, and extinction; or peace, survival and progress.

For fifty years, world peace has been secured on the tenuous principle of nuclear deterrence. But this cannot be the durable basis for peace. The conscience of humanity demands that the world move away from deterrence to disarmament.

Unfortunately, however, traditional nuclear powers have paid little heed to this universal demand. They first used the Cold War as a pretext for a new costly arms race. Now, even though the Cold War is over, they have sought to perpetuate their hegemony through discriminatory non-proliferation

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treaties, which are bound to fail.

It is this hypocrisy and hegemony, which forced India to rethink our nuclear policy recently. As you well know, my country has championed the cause of peace and disarmament with consistency and conviction for the past five decades.

We raised our voice for disarmament, both on our own behalf and on behalf of members of the Non-Aligned Movement, in every multilateral and bilateral forum. Not only was our demand disregarded, but also India's sovereign right to keep the nuclear option open was sought to be curtailed.

In the circumstances, we were forced to exercise our nuclear option both for reasons of national security and as a powerful challenge to the practitioners of nuclear apartheid. With this firm action, we have reminded the nuclear club that the voice of one-sixth of the humanity cannot be ignored.

The lesson of the late 20th century is, thus, simple: Disarmament—real, visible, and verifiable disarmament—is the only way to achieve the goal of non-proliferation.

I do hope that the leadership of America, the country with the largest stockpile of nuclear weapons and delivery systems and hence carryig the greatest responsibility for peace on earth, takes the right course of action in the coming years.

Apprehension argues that India and Pakistan have fought three wars in the last fifty years. They forget to add that there has been no war for the last 25 of the 50 years. And that is because of the bilateral Shimla Agreement arrived at between India and Pakistan in 1972.

Contrary to what some may believe, bilateralism works. It is the intrusion by third parties, however well intentioned, that creates complications.

Disarmament in turn demands democratization of the world order. And this brings us to the second greatest lesson of the 20th century.

This has truly been a Century of Democracy. More and more countries around the world have embraced democracy,

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of course with necessary local variations. But we see a strange dichotomy here.

Democracy at the global level, as a framework for setting the norms for international relations, has not kept pace with the march of democracy as a system of national governace. The rich and the powerful make and unmake rules to suit their partisan interest.

As the world moves into the 21st century, this situation is totally unsustainable. No nation, however rich and militarily powerful, can for long pursue interests that do not harmonize with the interests of the global community.

The age of colonialism, which was the curse of the past few centuries, is over forever. In no way can the unequal relations that marked this age be revived without deeply endangering peace and stability.

I do hope that America, the land that cherishes democratic values, takes concrete steps to promote democratization of the world order. The process could begin with democratization of the world order. The process could begin with democratization of the U.N. system.

Friends, we in India believe that Indo-U.S. relations, restructured on an equal footing, constitute the key element in the architecture of tomorrow's democratized world order. However, I must confess to being baffled by the unsatisfactory current state of relations between our two countries.

We are the two largest democracies in the world, and have similar political cultures, a free press, and the rule of law. We both have a tradition of private enterprise and free markets.

Above all, I see no conflict of interests between the two countries in the foreseeable future and yet all of us here would agree that the full potential of our relationship has not been realized in the last fifty years.

Whether it is regional arrangements dealing with Afghanistan, where we have vital security and other interests; whether it is cooperative arrangements in the Asia-Pacific region, where we have a clearly positive moderating, and CC-0. Nanaji Deshmukh Library, BJP, Jamhu. Digitized by eGangoin

stabilizing role to play; whether it is global organizations like the U.N. Security Council or the discriminaory Non-Proliferation Treaty; in all of these the United States does not appreciate and accommodate India's interests and concerns.

Secondly, we have been subjected to technlogy denials virtually from the time of our Independence. Our own export control regimes are extremely stringent and there has been no leakage of equipment or technology from India. Despite this, we find the U.S. unwilling to accommodate us in terms of technology transfers.

Similarly on South Asian issues, where our supreme national interests are involved, we encounter policy approaches from America that go contrary to our basic irreducible security needs.

An even more serious case of incomprehension in India are the public statements made by American leaders where our sensitivities are involved. The statement issued on South Asia during President Clinton's visit to China, and American attempts at putting pressure on Russia to end its defence and scientific cooperation with India are two prime examples of recent vintage.

For democratic governments like ours, which desire closer understanding with the U.S.A., it becomes extremely difficult to move forward in the face of such public declarations.

Friends, I have argued for restructuring of Indo-U.S. relations not just because they will help India—but also because they will help the U.S. itself. Let me repeat what I have said earlier: Indo-U.S. based on equality and mutuality of interests is going to be the mainstay of tomorrow's stable, democratic, world order.

Friends, by now it is well recognized that economic democracy is at the very core of democracy, both in a domestic set up as well as in international relations. But the financial system that has come into being in the post-world War Two period has proved itself to be anything but democratic.

The intrinsic inequities in this system cannot be rationalized

by saying that they are the result of market forces that brook no governmental intervention. The 20th century has been the heavy price that the dogma of communism extracted.

The world is today paying the price for another dogma: the dogma of the invisible hand of the market forces. We have seen how irrationally voltile the markets have been.

We have also seen how market instability in one part of the world quickly travels, like a seismic wave, to other parts of the world through the fault lines of the global financial system.

With market instability comes social and political instability. Overnight ordinary people see thair hard-earned savings evaporate, investors lose their market capitalization and countries lose the value of their currencies.

There is no doubt those nations that do not manage their economies on sound principles invite a penalty in this system. But often they and their innocent people pay the penalty of unemployment and price rise for not fault of their own.

It is rightly said that in the era of globalization, the global market for goods, services, investments, and human labour is one and indivisible—much like the atmosphere that surrounds our planet. Any damage to the atmosphere at one place adversly affects all the people inhabiting this planet.

Rich nations of the Western Hemisphere, therefore, should not be under the illusion that they are immune from the crisis that is currently rippling through the Asian markets. There is an urgent need for collective global action to reform the world's financial system by refocusing it to meet the priority growth needs of the human race.

We in India have taken a principled stand towards globalization—cautious, calibrated, and steady integration. This approach has served our national interests well. We have remained largely unaffected by the turmoil in the Asian markets.

We know we have to implement many more internal and external reforms to harness the full potential of our economy. We shall definitely do so. At the same time, we shall continue to raise our voice for radically reforming the global economic order as the main guarantor for a stable and peaceful 21st century.

There is a fourth important lesson of the 20th century and it has to do with how we manage diversities. All of us on this planet belong to different races, regions, cultures, and nationalities. We speak different languages and hold different views on politics and life. But we all share the same common home because we are all part of the same human family.

India's Vedic seers extolled this value by stating that, whereas the Truth is one, wise men express it differently— Ekam Sat Viprah Bahudha Vadanti.

This was always true. But in the age of globalization, when interaction and interdependence is a law rather than an exception, acceptance of the truth of "Unity in Diversity" and "Diversity in Unity" is not just an option. It is an inescapable necessity.

Sadly, unwillingness to accept this truth is at the root of much violence and strife in many parts of the world today. When such exclusivism and intolerance are wedded to narrow political goals, they even give rise to terrorism.

Friends, terrorism has become one of the gravest threats to civil society, and national security. Here again, both India and the U.S.A. have been its victims. We were shocked and horrified at the wanton loss of innocent American and African lives in the recent attacks on the U.S. Embassies in Nairobi and Dar-es-Salaam.

We shared the anguish and anger that you felt. The forces of international terrorism that launched these cowardly attacks are active in our region also. India has been a target of relentless terrorist violence. You have Lockerbie, we have Kanishka. You have the World Trade Center, we have Wandhama.

The threads lead back to one and the same source. It is contemptible that this is being sponsored and abetted from across our borders. One country in our region has already fallen to obscurantism. The international community must act determinedly to prevent the contagion from spreading.

As the world moves into the next century, we must accept multiculturism and respect for diversities as a way of life. I am happy to note here that both India and the United States, which have a rich experience in peacefully managing diversities, can work together in this area for the benefit of mankind.

Friends, on all these major challenges we are facing today, my belief is that progressive people all over the world have convergent views. I see this convergence especially among the forward-looking leaders, policy-makers, and intellectuals of India and America.

It is this convergence, it is this commonality of concerns and cognition, which reinforces my belief that India and the United States are natural allies in the quest for a better future for the world in the 21<sup>st</sup> century.

Thanks to the initiatives of non-governmental and non-partisan institutions like the Asia Society, I am sure this alliance will become stronger and stronger in the coming years.

In conclusion, as an ode to this natural Indo-American alliance, let me quote a few lines from the poem written by Swami Vivekananda, one of the greatest Indian sages of modern times.

It is called "To The Fourth of July". It was written a hundred years ago, on July 4, 1898 when he was travelling with some American disciples through the woods of Kashmir.

Move on, O Lord, in thy resistless path!
Till thy high noon o'erspreads the world
Till every land reflects thy light,
Till men and women, with uplifted head,
Behold their shackles broken, and
Know, in springing joy, their life renewed!

### Indian Culture: A Binding Force

DEMOCRACY FOR US is not merely a political system. It is an integral part of India's civilization and ethos. Not only is India a mature and vibrant democracy today, but people of Indian origin, too, have been promoting it in whichever part of the world they happen to live. Your conference is a proof of this fact.

For me personally, welcoming you is a matter of added satisfaction. I am also a Parliamentarian like you. I have served in the Indian Parliament for more than four decades. I have interacted closely with my brothers and sisters of Indian origin who have been living and working in foreign lands. This interaction has always made me marvel at their achievements in business, academics, research and other walks of life.

But today I am interacting with a very special set of people—those Indians who have made a mark in the parliamentary system of their respective countries. You are very special to us because you show that India's children, who are living outside India, are now winning the trust of their fellow citizens. Friends, I am truly proud of you.

Who would have imagined that the sons and daughters, grandsons and great grandsons of our forefathers who had left India's shores to work so hard in lands that were across the seven seas, are now legislators? Who would have imagined that in many countries that are so very different from each other persons of Indian origin could some day contest and win elections?

You imagined this, and then you did it. You have worked hard to become legislators. Your constituents are from different

Speech at the inauguration of a conference of Parliamentarians of Indian origin, New Delhi, 28 November 1998

nationalities and cultures and religions. Yet, they have chosen to elect you, because they think that you are the best person to represent their interests.

Truly, this is a success story without parallel. Many other nations have a Diaspora. However, it is only the Indian Diaspora that has: first, settled in almost every country on this planet; second, taken up almost every profession there; third, succeeded spectacularly in everything that they have done. Finally, in spite of these achievements, they have still retained their emotional, cultural and spiritual links with Bharat, our common motherland.

Why has a person from India done well wherever he is and whatever he is doing? That is because, assimilation and integration comes naturally to Indians. Our scriptures have taught us: Vasudhaiva Kutumbakam—The entire world is one family. This means that we are not rootless when we settle abroad and we can accept and work with people of other cultures and religions.

Our culture and our scriptures emphasize the pursuit of knowledge. Which is why, Indians are doing so well in every knowledge-based industry. In computers, in the sciences, in management, in law, in medicine, and in all other professions, people of Indian origin have earned a name for themselves and for India.

Our culture emphasizes the pursuit of commerce and industry. The Indus Valley civilization was the cradle of trade. Hence, those persons of Indian origin who originally came from a part of India that had a strong commercial culture have prospered as entrepreneurs all across the world.

Our culture also emphasizes the acquisition of skills. India's skilled builders, mechanics, carpenters and technicians are valued in many parts of the world. They have established their dominance especially in the Gulf countries. The biggest source of foreign exchange for India is, indeed, the remittances of these Indians working abroad.

Be it in knowledge-based professions, trade and commerce,

skilled jobs or in legislatures, what is the secret of your success? It is hard work. Every one of you has got where you are because you have worked much harder than others.

Indians have become known as the smartest in their profession, the canniest businesspersons, and the hardest working immigrants. Today, however, the world should acknowledge that India's children are also becoming leaders in politics and community life.

The figures speak for themselves. There are two hundred legislators in nineteen countries, sixty-eight of whom are Ministers, four of whom are Speakers in their national legislative assemblies, and two are Prime Ministers. Dr. Chhedi Jagan in Guyana, S. Ramgoolam and Dr. Anirood Jugnauth in Mauritius, Noor Mohammed Hassanali in Trinidad reached the highest office because of their leadership qualities.

There are many local reasons for the increasing number of Indian parliamentarians. However, being originally from India would be your most powerful reason. The values of seeking a consensus, accommodating and harmonizing divergent views, and lastly, not seeking a hegemony over others, come naturally to persons from India. Whatever success that I have achieved in fifty years in public life, has been because of the same values.

Dear brothers and sisters, you live in different countries. As parliamentarians, you are also influential opinion makers in your respective countries. On this occasion, I would like you to know some important truths about what is happening in India and carry them to your constituents.

My Government is committed to deepening, broadening and speeding up economic reforms. We have managed our economy fairly well, in spite of many odds and constraints. At a time when many countries in Asia and elsewhere are facing the effects of financial turmoil, India has shown stability and resilience in her economic system.

The present slowdown in the economy is a passing phase. India offers excellent opportunities for investment and business—both for foreigners and, even more so for people of Indian origin.

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In this context, I should gratefully acknowledge the excellent response from the people of Indian origin to the recent issue of Resurgent India Bonds. We could raise more than 4 billion dollars through these bonds. I am confident that you will respond equally positively when we decide to create similar investment opportunities in future for Indians abroad.

At the same time, I would like you to create awareness among investors and businessmen in your respective countries about opportunities in India.

I wish to touch upon another important issue. On May 11, India conducted nuclear tests and became a nuclear weapons nation. We took this step to strengthen our national security and also to contribute to the cause of global nuclear disarmament from a position of strength.

We are as committed to the ideal of world peace as ever. We have declared that our nuclear weapons are meant exclusively for self-defense. We will never make first-use of them, nor will we ever use them against a non-nuclear nation.

Some countries criticized our action and even imposed economic sanctions. India has shown that we will not buckle under any threat or sanctions. With the passage of time, even those who criticized us earlier have gained a better understanding of our action and our overall philosophy about disarmament.

Nevertheless there is still a great need to educate people in foreign countries—especially politicians, businessmen, media and the intelligentsia—about India's stand on the nuclear issue. I would urge you to participate in this exercise of communication and education.

I should also mention here India's contribution to peacemaking and consensus-building around the world. From Korea and Vietnam in the 1950s to Cambodia and Iraq in the 1990s, Indians have helped bring peace. In Bosnia and Somalia, Indian peacekeepers have served with distinction. The United Nations has often asked Indians to lead sensitive posts. The first commander-in-cheif of the multinational peacekeeping force

in Bosnia and Herzegovina was an Indian. An Indian representing the United Nations in Iraq has made an important contribution to easing of tensions there.

This stengthens my point that Indians everywhere have it in them to succeed as leaders of people who belong to different backgrounds.

Friends, we are all Bharat Mata's children. I acknowledge and applaud your achievements in your respective countries. I only hope that you will, by doing better at your work, bring greater glory for yourself, your home country, and for Bharat Mata. The more you succeed, the better ambassadors of goodwill for India you become.

I wish all of you and your families an enjoyable stay in India. With these words, I inaugurate this conference.

# Show Restraint in Resolving Differences

WE HAVE BEEN closely following developments relating to Iraq. India has close historical ties and strong affinities with the countries and peoples of the region. We have been deeply concerned about the sufferings of the people of Iraq, and have called for the lifting of sanctions in tandem with Iraq's compliance with the relevant U.N. Security Council resolutions. We have consistently counseled restraint and moderation in resolving differences that have emerged from time to time in the interation of the U.N. Special Commission (UNSCOM) with Iraq.

Statement in Parliament on military action in Iraq, New Delhi, 17 December 1998

The Government of India is gravely concerned at and deplores these airstrikes being carried out on Iraq by the U.S. and the U.K. It is particularly regrettable that this unilateral step has been undertaken at the very time when the U.N. Security Council was in session to discuss developments arising from the report of the Head of UNSCOM, which the U.N. Secretary General had forwarded to the Council with his recommendations proposing alternative courses of action. This attack raises serious questions regarding the functioning of the collective and consultative procedures of the U.N. Security Council. It also undermines the ability of the Council to verify Iraq's compliance with the relevant Council Resolutions.

It has been our considered view that use of force in this situation would be counter-productive. This issue needs to be resolved diplomatically through peaceful means and dialogue. We have supported efforts by the U.N. in this direction. We have noted the statement of the U.N. Secretary General expressing deep regret at the latest development. We call for an immediate halt to the military action and a resumption of diplomatic efforts under the auspices of the U.N.

The Indian community in Iraq numbering about fifty persons is safe. We have been in touch with our Embassy and are taking all measures to ensure their welfare.

## Friendship between India and Trinidad & Tobago

THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN India and your beautiful country goes back to 1845 when the first ship 'Fatel Razack' carrying 225 Indian indentured labourers from India reached here. India's struggle for independence was not just for itself, but was for all the colonised people. It was in this spirit that we established diplomatic relations with your country in 1948, even before it became an independent state.

There is a strong bond between the Indian people and the people of Trinidad and Tobago, which has its roots in our shared heritage. It was to celebrate this bond that President Dr. Shanker Dayal Sharma came here in 1995. Both our countries have multiethnic and multi-religious societies living in peace and harmony. We share the same democratic ideals. The considerable geographical distance that separates India and Trinidad & Tobago is more than bridged by cooperation, friendship, trust and understanding.

Your historic visit to India in January 1997 as Chief Guest at our Republic Day celebrations opened a new chapter in our relations. As a result of the number of agreements signed and concerted follow-up efforts by the two Governments to implement these in the last two years, our relations have expanded and diversified. The scope for mutually beneficial cooperation is vast. I am confident that my visit will further consolidate our relationship of trust and friendship.

I had a very useful meeting with President Robinson earlier in the day and we shared perspectives on issues of mutual interest. I have also had meetings with Mr. Patrick Manning, Leader of Opposition and a host of socio-cultural organizations. These discussions have enhanced my understanding of the region.

Excellency, this morning we jointly turned the sod of the Mahatma Gandhi Institute for Cultural Cooperation. On completion, this building will be a living monument to our everlasting friendship; In fact, this Institute is already functioning since last January in temporary premises provided by your Government. Indian teachers of music, dance and the Hindi language are presently teaching at the Institute. But this Institute is not only a Centre for the teaching of the Indian culture, it is intended as a Centre of synthesis where people of all ethnic groups and religions come together to understand the differences and learn to respect each other. Culture was never intended as a divisive force but a platform on which people can come together.

While our cultural relations are on a sound and firm footing, the economic and commercial relations is still nascent but growing. Our distances are great, but in this age of superfast communications they can not be an excuse for inaction. We are happy to see that Trinidad & Tobago's economy is growing rapidly and is the largest and the most industrialized in the whole Caribbean region. Your small country, Excellency, is rich in natural resources and more importantly in its hardworking-committed people. India is looking to collaborate with your country in the hydrocarbon sector where the Indian Oil Corporation can cooperate with Trinidad & Tobago in optimizing its operation by way of reduction in losses and fuel and utilities consumption to improve economies of the refinery; and to develop a safe and economical product transportation and distribution system.

Similarly, there are a number of steps that our two Governments can take and are taking to step up our economic relations. As a concrete step in this direction, I am happy to tell you that your longstanding demand for improved access to Angoustra Bitters will be met. I am confident that the Agreement on Avoidance of Double Taxation that was signed this morning between our two Governments will provide impetus to the flow of private investment.

I am also happy that your country has found the Indian CC-0. Nanaji Deshmukh Library, BJP, Jammu. Digitized by eGangotri

technical and economic programme useful for upgradation of skills of your personnel in diverse areas of interest. Excellency, we will be pleased to extend the fullest cooperation for upgrading your human resources, including in the field of Information Technology.

I am also pleased that our two Governments have signed a Memorandum of Understanding on cooperation in the field of housing and human settlement development. The inauguration tomorrow of the Low Cost Housing Centre in Port of Spain is a testimony to India's commitment to transfer of technology among developing nations and South-South Cooperation for the benefit of the people. From here I go to Montego Bay in Jamaica for the G-15 Summit where we reiterate our commitment to cooperation among developing countries.

India's record for promoting peace and cooperation among countries is widely recognized. We have also worked consistently for furthering the interests of developing countries. Trinidad & Tobago and India have cooperated well at the international fora. We look forward to even closer cooperation with your country in ensuring that the interests of developing countries are protected and promoted in the reforms process of the United Nations.

Your country, Excellency, through membership of the Association of Caribbean States and CARICOM is in the forefront of regional cooperation and promotion of free trade in your region. We have seen, Your Excellency, that your voice is heard with respect and your counsel heeded among the countries of the Caribbean. In our area, too, the countries of the region are working together in SAARC. India ia deeply committed to regional cooperation.

I would once again like to thank Your Excellency for the very warm welcome you have given me personally. I shall leave Trinidad & Tobago with very fond memories of my short but very fruitful visit. I look forward Excellency to working closely with you for building on the foundations of our friendship a strong edifice of mutually beneficial relations.

# South-South Cooperation for Economic Stability

PERMIT ME, FIRST of all, on my behalf and on behalf of my delegation, to thank you and through you the Government and people of Jamaica for the warm and generous hospitality extended to us. Your beautiful country and friendly people provide an ideal setting for the meeting of our Group. I am confident that under your chairmanship, we will have fruitful deliberations and a successful outcome.

The focus of this Summit is the state of the world economy, which is uncertain and even somewhat unstable. Recent events have shown that the boon of large scale capital flows can turn into a bane when they make a dramatic exit. We have seen this happening in varying proportions in East and South East Asia, Russia and more recently in Brazil. It is not abnormal for markets to react to a perceived aberration in a country's economic fundamentals or in its economic and monetary policies. But, wide fluctuation in currency values has led to loss of confidence of foreign investors. Once an economy is engulfed, it takes a significant length of time for it to recover. Also, it is not that the adverse effects are felt only by the affected economies. Global interdependance has ensured that the shock impulses are transmitted worldwide and no country is immune. In particular, this is posing a grave threat to emerging economies whose markets, institutions and regulatory mechanisms are still at an evolutionary stage.

India has herself not remained unaffected by the crisis which has had its impact on our external trade, foreign direct investment inflows into the country and portfolio investments. We however, remain committed to continuing with our economic liberalization programme at a pace and in a manner

that we consider is best suited to our needs. Our economy is expected to grow by 5 to 6 per cent by this financial year and our objective is to attain a sustainable growth rate of 7 to 8 per cent during the coming years.

We cannot however remain complacent. Fortunately, there is greater realization now of the need for reforming the global financial structure. Similarly on issues like capital account convertibility there is greater appreciation even within the IMF about the need for caution. In the absence however of a comprehensive institutional framework within which proposals for reform can be examined, it becomes necessary that fora like G-15 look at the various options.

We have given some thought to this matter and consider that there should be some broad principles guiding any such reform. Transparency among all players, both public and private and developed and developing, should be a critical element. We need to devise a rule-based system to bring greater discipline to the global financial markets. Where a crisis does erupt, the country will need to be quickly assisted while at the same time prompt preventive steps are taken against the contagion effect. Any assistance should also pay special attention to the social consequences arising from the crisis. These are, however, some broad ideas.

Let me now turn to international trade. The expectations raised by the Uruguay Round have unfortunately not been realized. Meaningful market access is still to accrue in areas like textiles or architecture, to name only two areas. We, however, see a resurgence in protectionism in the form of antidumping, safeguards and other actions. There are also some unilateral trade measures which are hurting us.

For the services negotiations, our objective should be to achieve substantial liberalization of interest to developing countries as also regarding movement of natural persons. All these and other issues could also be looked at in the preparatory meeting that we have offered to host before the Third WTO Ministerial meeting.

An unfortunate effect of the globalization trend is that the priorities of development cooperation have virtually receded into the background. Yet the structural weaknesses of developing countries are still starkly evident. The G-15 can play a critical role in bringing the importance of development cooperation back to global agenda. We welcome the initiative in the ILO to develop a global employment strategy to address the problem of growing unemployment.

Promoting greater cooperation among our own membership has been one of our key objectives. India has been actively implementing a number of projects in areas such as solar energy, gene banks, small-scale industries, computer training etc. We shall continue to persevere with these efforts. We have also been participating in projects initiated by other member countries.

Increasingly, global markets are driven by forces of specialization. Of particular importance to us are certain strategic sectors which can facilitate growth prospects in other sectors in a critical manner. It is for this reason that we have proposed a new initiative aimed at intensification of G-15 linkages in the areas of biotechnology, information and communication technology and infrastructure. I am glad that this proposal has received endorsement. Science today offers new products and innovative solutions. In times to come progress in information technology would have the greatest influence on the global economy thereby increasing productivity, returns on capital, quality and efficiency in all sectors of the economy. Biotechnology, along with rapid advances in engineering and informatics, is radically changing some of the fundamental concepts regarding living organisms.

It is clear that the 21st century will-be defined by advances in Information Technology and biological sciences. The developing countries should fully prepare themselves to benefit from these revolutionizing technologies. Tangible programmes of cooperation among us in these areas, if successfully implemented, could go a long way in contributing to the welfare and well-being of our various citizens.

### Each for All and All for Each

WELCOME TO INDIA and to New Delhi for this seminal conference on democracy. It is a great honour for India to host you all. Being the largest democracy in the world, we are happy that you have chosen our country for holding this, the first-ever global conference on democracy.

In the lexicon of man, there is not a more powerful idea than democracy. No other system guarantees simultaneously both individual freedom and collective good, thereby realizing one of the highest principles of civilized life: Each for All, and All for Each. In humanity's quest for dignity and better life, many isms have been tried. None has matched democracy in its universality, simplicity, and transparency. None will. Democracy has stood the test of time. It has been tested against terrorizing fascism and also against tyrannical totalitarianism, and democracy has won.

For us in India, democracy is more than a system of governance—it is a moral order. The Dharma Chakra or the Wheel of Law that you see emblazoned on our national flag is more than two thousand years old. It continues to give expression to an ancient democratic tradition that has renewed itself through the vicissitudes of history, assimilating the best of the many traditions that joined our national mainstream.

The idea—nay, the dream—of a democratic social order, which is free of want and exploitation, was the inspiration for our fight for Independence. After freedom came, we have discovered that it is also the lifeline for our national unity, integrity, and socio-economic development. Which is why, we are proud to have preserved our system of governance against all the odds that a developing country in a democratic mould faces.

Video message on the occasion of NED Democracy Conference, New Delhi, 14 February 1999

One of the greatest achievements of the 20th century lies in the spread and acceptance of democracy almost universally. And where it is not attained, or attained only partially, the idea that beckons most powerfully is the goal of democracy.

Even as we celebrate the global march of democracy, all of us are acutely aware of the shortcomings and problems that still bedevil it. Democracy, which rests on the axiom that all men are equal, cannot deliver on its promise in a system plagued by glaring social and economic inequalities. These inequities, within and among nations, are the primary source of injustice, instability, and violence in the world today. Poverty is a threat to democracy. The danger of not fulfilling the growing aspirations of the deprived peoples cannot be ignored anymore.

Therefore, one of the greatest challenges before mankind in the 21<sup>st</sup> century is the advancement of the agenda of economic democracy for all citizens, for all races and communities, and for all nations on earth. This has become all the more urgent in the era of globalization, when the gulf between the rich and the poor is widening—and not narrowing. It is for this reason that India has been persistently advocating the cause of democracy globally, with particular emphasis on the restructuring of the UN system and the Bretton Woods architecture of the global financial order. India, which is home to one-sixth of humanity, will continue to collaborate with countries of the developing and developed world to advance this cause.

While extending my best wishes to your conference, I express my confidence that your deliberations will deepen the global debate on how to realize the dream of democracy for all the denizens of the world in the early part of the next century.

#### Future Beckons Us

A NEW CENTURY and a new age is knocking on our doors as we are together here. Our independence has completed fifty years. We are both proud of it and also sad. We are proud because both our countries hve maintained their independece. The sadness is occasioned because even after 50 years we have not freed ourselves of poverty and unemployment.

I am grateful to the Prime Minister for arranging this banquet for me at this historic place. This beautiful fort is the place of birth of Shahjehan. Akbar spent more than ten years of his life here.

My delegation and I are very pleased at the cordial reception and hospitality of yours.

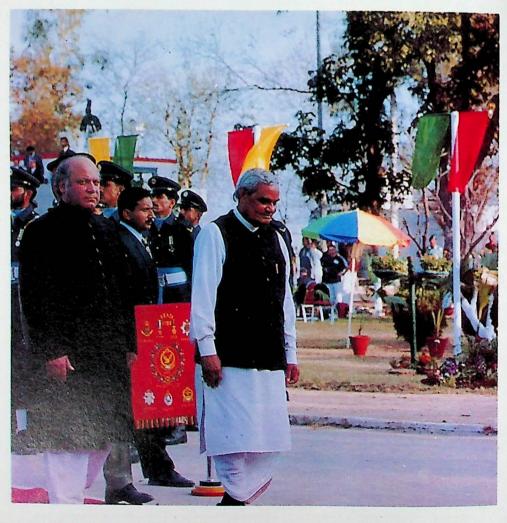
Mr Prime Minister, you are fully maintaining the tradition of this historic fort and the city of Lahore. On this occasion, it would be desirable to recall the couplet of the eleventh century poet, Masud bin Saad bin Salman:

SHUD DAR GUM "LOHUR" KHANAM YARAB! YARAB! KI DAR ARZOO-E-ANAM YARAB!

Mr Prime Minister, this is the first visit of any Indian Prime Minister in the past ten years, I am much pleased to be in your midst. Mixed emotions rose in my heart when I inspected the guard of honour and saw the beautiful spectacle of the sunset. I was happy that after 21 years I was among you with a message of peace and friendship. But there was sadness that we had spent such a long time in mutual conflict and bitterness. It does not behove us that two great countries like India and Pakistan have mutual tension.

When I came to you as Foreign Minister I was alone but today there are with me a cross-section and delegates of all classes of India.

Free rendering of the speech in Hindi on the occasion of official banquet, Lahore, 20 February 1999



Prime Minister Shri Atal Bihari Vajpayee during his Pakistan visit, Wagha, 20 February 1999

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A bus running between Delhi and Lahore is not merely the easing of travel. Running between the two countries and joining them, this bus demonstrates the love of the peoples of the two countries for improved relations and for living together. If it were a mere bus, a vehicle of iron and steel it could not have created a stir and hopes, not only between the two countries but almost throughout the world.

Mr Prime Minister, it is our duty that we create trust and fellow-feeling in accordance with the hopes and aspirations of our people and raise a strong structure of cooperation between the two countries. In recent months we have paid attention to such issues which should benefit the people directly. The two countries are keeping the continuity of the mutual talks so that we can decide that humanitarian issues are sorted out quickly, the possibilities of economic and trade cooperation are examined like the purchase of sugar and power, and act on them, mutual confidence building measures are discussed and a consensus is evolved. This is only the first step. I am confident that we will give instructions to our respective officers on what we want to do together.

We have talked about those aspects of our relations on which we are not in agreement. It is necessary to talk on these issues. Since we want to solve issues we should take care to see that there is no questions which cannot be solved by direct talks. In reality, this is the only way.

There is no issue in our relations which can be solved by violence and bloodshed. Difficult and outstanding issues can be solved in a clean climate, in a balanced approach and with humility and honesty. I have to tell only one thing to those who advocate violence, follow a violent method and encourage violence: let them understand the truth of peace and understanding. We, therefore, welcome talks on all outstanding issues, which include Jammu and Kashmir, in the continuity of a composite dialogue. The future beckons us as we advance towards a new age. It tells us and, in reality, demands that we think of the welfare of the coming generations, of the well-being of children's children and their children.

I have a message from India. Let us take a road, which would remove mutual distrust, conflict and differences, solid peace and harmony are established and a climate is created for friendship, fellow-feeling and cooperation. I have full faith that through joint effort we can succeed in this task.

I extend an invitation from the bottom of my heart to the Prime Minister and the honoured Begum to visit India. We look forward to this visit. We will welcome you with the same enthusiasm with which you welcomed us.

I wish you prosperity and progress and peace and harmony and cooperation between India and Pakistan.

### Give Friendship a Chance

**W**E CAME HERE yesterday and today we depart. This is the way of the world. I am not going alone and I did not come alone. A delegation, a representative and select body, has accompanied mè from India. They are people who have made a name in different areas. In these 24 hours I spent in Lahore I felt that the distance between Delhi and Lahore has been reduced somewhat. We have come somewhat closer, the trust has increased and our steps to march ahead together are faster.

As I said yesterday, I consciously wanted to come here by bus. My intention at first was to return from the Wagah border after meeting Mian Sahib (Mr Nawaz Sharif). But he said this could not happen, returning from the door was not proper, one must come inside the house.

I have fond memories of Lahore. This is not the first time

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Free rendering of the speech in Hindi at the civic reception, Lahore, 21 February 1999

that I have been to Lahore and it is not the last time. When I first visited Lahore the British ruled here and I had gone upto Kohat and Bannu. I was a high school student and had gone to Anarkali (Bazar). The next time when I came to Lahore after becoming the Minister of External Affairs I talked in the night to the Governor (of West Punjab) and pointed out that my official programme did not include a visit to Anarkali and how could I return to Delhi without going to Anarkali? So, in the night special arrangements were made for me to go to Anarkali. This time I did not go because new buds had unfolded themselves.

In the last 24 hours, we (the two Prime Ministers) have reached a few decisions which are good decisions. I am sure you would like them. The world wonders and we also think why we are left behind in the race (for progress)? Mian Sahib raised the issue yesterday and the question bothers us all. The world has moved tremendously and imperialism has ended. It was said that the sun never set on the (British) Raj. But the Raj went down while the sun looked on. The chains fell and the handcuffs broke loose. As long as we were dependent we used to persuade ourselves that we could do this and that once we were free. We were looking for excuses for everything. Today, however, the world is not prepared to listen to excuses. Nor are our minds ready to find new ones.

God has given us everything. Nature has showered wealth on us. We have an immense population, which is a big human resource. Our farmers are hard-working, our workers know how to sweat themselves. The housewife in our two countries know the art of running a household in a modest income. Our young men (and women) believe in conquering science and technology. Why are we lagging behind then?

The Prime Minister had quoted from my poem "Jang Na Hone Denge" (We will not let war happen). I wrote the poem, not after I became a Minister, but before it.

"India and Pakistan are neighbours and have to live together.

In love and war, both have to bear it.

We have fought thrice, how hard is the bargain?

Russian bomb or American, the same blood has to flow.

Our children must not suffer our fate,

We will not let war happen."

Let me quote a verse in the poem:

"Do we wish to stop war?

Do we wish to create conditions for avoiding war?

Let there be peace.

Let there be no extra expenditure on weapons, Just enough to meet our needs."

During that time, I wrote:

"We need peace,

We love life."

What greater blessing than life can there be in this world? Sometimes we fail to understand the value of life even when we are alive. How invaluable is life!

"We need peace, we love life.

We need peace, creation is at hand.

We need peace, we love life. Creation is at hand.

We have declared war on hunger, on illness."

It is not as though we are resigned to our fate; and we should not be so resigned. We shall struggle, but not against a neighbour, not among ourselves. We have declared war on hunger and illness and let the world lend a helping hand. We invite the world to come and help us and march together. We know that we have to ensure our development and stand on our feet. But today's world has become so small and we cannot become an island. We have to help each other and try to march forward with each other's help.

"We need peace, we love life. We need peace, Creation is at hand,

We have declared war on hunger, illness.

Let the world come forward and lend a helping hand.

We will not let this green and fertile land be bloody, We will not let war happen."

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Someone among you can ask me: when you wrote such a poem, when you declared "we will not let war happen", why was it necessary to resort to the atomic blast in Pokhran? This question could arise and should arise. We should talk about it with open hearts. The Pokhran blast was not an aggressive measure, it was a defensive one. We have been trapped in war on three occasions and we wish to stop war for all time. India waited after the first blast when Mrs Indira Gandhi was at the helm. We were hoping that all nuclear weapons would be ended in the world. This, however, did not happen and the world did not move in the direction of nuclear disarmament. The weapons became deadlier and more destructive and some people were engaged in this task. Our scientists were of the view that some thought must be given to it. It is very essential that atomic energy is utilized for peaceful purposes but it is also essential that its use for destructive purposes must be stopped.

We had declared after the explosions that there would be no further blasts. We had also declared that we would not be the first country to use nuclear weapons. We will neither use them nor shall be the first. We also said that we would not use nuclear weapons against those who do not possess them. As a member of NAM (Non-Aligned Movement), which recently held a conference in South Africa, we had repeated the statement that all nuclear weapons must be destroyed in the world in a time-frame. What is the need of such weapons now? They are no longer necessary; possibly they played a part, once upon a time, of first terror. But they have no relevance today. Think of the huge expenditure and the competition. I had a discussion about it with the Pakistan Prime Minister today. We have decided that there would an exchange of views, what we in India are doing and what Pakistan is doing in the matter. At present we have no information on the issue. If we come to know of something that is from others. What your neighbour is doing you do not know and it is necessary to change the situation.

We have to shape world opinion and it is essential that India and Pakistan work together in this area. Both have enhanced responsiblity and there is no other way save peace.

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There is no scope for playing with ignition now. Small ignition can lead to a conflagration which can destroy everything. We must stop small fires and concentrate on the solution of poverty, unemployment and illness. We must think how we are lagging behind and why people are not able to lead a life to which they are entitled. We need peace for it and issues of peace have to be solved. In order to solve them, we need to create a climate of trust.

This morning we had before us the question whether I should visit Minar-e-Pakistan. My programme was drawn up and I wanted to go there. But some people were of the view that if I went to the place it would mean that I had put my seal of approval on the formation of Pakistan. I asked what all this meant. Is Pakistan dependent on my approval? Pakistan has its own stamp and it is in operation. But the suspicion is so deeprooted and it is possible that on return I am asked why I visited Minar-e-Pakistan when I had been on an official visit to your country. I would reply to it and I know the people would be satisfied with my answer. I also know that some would not be. Whether I should go to Minar-e-Pakistan has become a debatable issue. It is true that we did not want partition. As I said when I came to this part first and went upto Kohat and Bannu the whole of India was one and the British ruled us. That India is before our eyes. The country was divided and new provinces and separate countries were formed. This hurt us and although the wounds have healed the blot has indeed persisted. But the blot reminds us that we have to live together and living together requires that we march together.

We wish that Pakistan prospers and you also wish that we prosper. History can be changed but not geography. You can change friends but not neighbours. Let us, therefore, live like good neighbours. In 1977-78 we had made a beginning and eased the restrictions on visiting each other's country. You would perhaps remember it and people still recall it. We are set to do this again. I do not wish to make a unilateral announcement of the decisions taken today and they would be announced in due course. But it is true that you cannot visit family members all of a sudden. The High Commissions are crowded and doors CC-0. Nanaji Deshmukh Library, BJP, Jammu. Digitized by eGangotri

open and close on time. You have a sudden problem and it has a habit of arising all of a sudden. You cannot visit your relatives then. If you are able to get there you find that your visa is for a city and if you want to visit another the police come into the picture. Imagine all that comes with it. It is hardly necessary for me to say it. Those policemen who are listening to me should not take it amiss. I am not saying it for those who are present here. I am talking of the system and we have to think about this matter.

Some people go out fishing and find that they have entered the wrong sea. Then they reach a lock-up and instead of catching fish are caught themselves. We have decided that such people should be released at once. But I have realized after being Prime Minister for a year that merely deciding the issue by the two Prime Ministers is not the end of the matter. Something more has to be done and we have decided that this would be done. The conditions must change and the climate must reflect a changed situation. What is needed is friendship and for that trust is required.

I wanted (Ali) Sardar Jafri Sahib to accompany me. He could not come. I saw a couplet of his quoted in an English newspaper:

"You come from the garden of Lahore, we come with the light of the morning of Benares. Afterwards, we will inquire who is the enemy."

Enmity has been endured for a long time. Now friendship must have a chance. Brothers and sisters, we have tried to improve our relations with all neighbours, including Pakistan. We have just entered into an Agreement with Sri Lanka about free trade. We have reached an Agreement with Bangladesh about irrigation waters. You must have read in the papers that like the Delhi-Lahore bus we are going to have a Calcutta-Dhaka bus also. It is not a matter of one bus and it is not going to stop at that. Today we are making a beginning. Friendship never makes you feel this is enough. Yes, we get fed up sometimes in enmity. Our economic relations are developing. We are going to take elaborate steps in trade and economic

matters with Pakistan. We want to buy your surplus power; the rates should be proper. Despite floods and storm we have an excellent wheat crop. I told Mian Sahib (Mr Nawaz Sharif) that "we hear you are importing wheat from a distance. We are in a position to deliver wheat at your doorstep." It is not as though I am recounting different items.

Problems can be solved and for a solution a proper climate should be created. Some steps have to be taken with courage and I promise that when courage is needed for such steps you would not find me and my colleagues wanting. You would not find us retreating. When we decided on the Pokhran atomic blasts I was reminded by some people of my poem. I have been to Hiroshima and I have seen the devastation in Nagasaki. It was not necessary to use the nuclear weapons there because the war there had ended and the Allies had won. It was not in self-defence that the nuclear weapons had been used there. People today are paying a price for it.

The title of my poem was the poem of Hiroshima. It was the bleeding heart of a poet. My mind was clear when a serious decision was made and it is clear today. Together we have to create a world free of atomic weapons. There is no question of our using the nuclear weapons of ours. But for that a climate of friendship is required. I hope that my 24-hour visit would help in creating such a climate. As I said the distance between Delhi and Lahore has been reduced and we have to reduce it further. Not only between (Delhi and) Lahore but between the entire Pakistan and India we wish to create closeness. I have every confidence that in all this we will get the cooperation of the Pakistan Prime Minister and his colleagues, and of the entire people of Pakistan. We will march together.

I am very grateful for the reception accorded to me and my delegation. It will be my effort to fulfil together the hopes that have arisen in your hearts and we can create a new climate in South Asia.

### VII Miscellaneous

### Gita's Message is Universal and Eternal

It is may privilege to be present at today's pious function to mark the opening of this magnificent temple as also the Glory of India Vedic Cultural Centre in Delhi. The piousness of today's function is further enhanced by the fact that it is taking place on the auspicious occasion of Ram Navami. I would first of all like to express my deepest sense of appreciation for the vision, dedication and achievement of the International Society for Krishna Consciousness — ISKCON —and all those who have collaborated with it to present this unique spiritual gift to the nation's capital.

The ISKCON movement has few parallels in the world in terms of its rapid global spread, its trans-national, trans-ethnic and trans-professional appeal, its outward simplicity, and the devotional energy of its followers. In less than three-and-a-half decades since its inception, it has established temples in practically all parts of the world—and many of them are marvels of beauty, such as the one that is being opened in New Delhi today.

The maha mantra of Hare Krishna Hare Rama reverberates to the dancing feet of ISKCON devotees each morning and evening in temples from Stockholm to Sao Paulo, and from Miami to Mayapur.

What ISKCON has achieved is, indeed, Globalization of the *Gita's* Appeal. Some people say that my Government is opposed to globalization. But let me say that I am all in favour of globalization of the message of the *Gita*—and, indeed, of the messages of all the sacred books of the world, with which the message of the *Gita* bears close conformity.

If today the Bhagawad Gita is printed in millions of copies in scores of Indian languages and distributed in all the nooks and corners of the world, the credit for this great sacred service goes chiefly to ISKCON. I understand that ISKCON is also propagating the message of the Gita through the latest gadgets of Information Technology. And this Temple itself provides an astonishing demonstration of the use of hi-tech to popularise the higher Truth of life and the Universe. For this one accomplishment alone, Indians should be eternally grateful to this devoted spiritual army of Swami Prabhupada's followers.

The voyage of Bhaktivedanta Swami Prabhupada to the United States in 1965 and the spectacular popularity his movement gained in a very short span of 12 years must be regarded as one of the greatest spiritual events of this century.

What accounts for the rapid spread of the ISKCON movement globally? The answer should be sought in two factors: one external and the other internal. The external factor was in my opinion, the disillusionment in the leading minds in western countries, arising out of the domination of the materialist ideology and culture in the West. Both capitalism and communism gave birth to disillusionment, since both are essentially materialist ideologies that are incapable of satisfying the real needs of man. Young, sensitive and searching minds could not have reconciled themselves to the reality of wars, violence, greed, excessive consumerism, degradation of the human and natural environment. They had to seek answers elsewhere. And ISKCON was one movement where any found the answer.

The internal factor was, of course, the inherent strength of ISKCON's message, a message founded in the philosophy of the Gita. It answers all the modern concerns and needs of the world: be it man's quest for inner peace, his need for belonging to the rest of the human and natural community, his concern for the environment, his attitude towards work and his attitude towards death. The Gita provides a comprehensive and internally consistent answers to all these concerns. It is in this respect that ISKCON differs from other passing fads and

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fashions that appealed to disillusioned western minds in the 1960s and '70s. These fads come and go, but the ISKCON movement is growing from strength to strength.

The transcendental and universal message of the *Bhagawad-Gita* is evocatively communicated by the Bhaktivedanta Swami Prabhupada in his book '*Bhagawad-Gita*: *As It Is*'. And I would like to read the following excerpt from his introduction to the book:

"In this world men are not meant for quarrelling like cats and dogs. Men must be intelligent to realize the importance of human life and refuse to act like ordinary animals. A human being should realize the aim of his life, and this direction is given in all Vedic literatures, and the essence is given in Bhagavad-gita. Vedic literature is meant for human beings, not for animals. Animals can kill other living animals, and there is no question of sin on their part, but if a man kills an animal for the satisfaction of his uncontrolled taste, he must be responsible for breaking the laws of nature. . . If we properly utilize the instructions of Bhagavad-gita, then our whole life will become purified, and ultimately we will be able to reach the destination which is beyond this material sky (yad gatva na nivartante tad dhaama paraman mama).

"That destination is called the santana sky, the eternal, spiritual sky. In this material world we find that everything is temporary. It comes into being, stays for some time, produces some by-products. dwindles and then vanishes. That is the law of the material world, whether we use as an example this body, or a piece of fruit or anything. But beyond this temporary world there is another world of which we have information. That world consists of anther nature, which is sanatana, eternal."

In this distinguished gathering of spiritual masters and spiritual seekers I am indeed a layman. But permit me to share with you a few thoughts of mine on the relevance of the *Gita's* message in today's national and global context.

The Gita's relevance is universal and eternal because it provides a satisfactory answer to three basic questions of life—What are we? What should we do? And how should we live? Human beings have confronted these questions in all societies at all times. The Gita answers these questions through the harmonisation of Jnana Yoga, Karma Yoga and Bhakti Yoga.

The beauty of Indian culture is that it made the essence of these three paths of Yoga available to the lowest man as well as to the highest seeker.

The *Gita* is not a prescription for non-action or passivity. It gives a radical message of action, which transforms the Self and the Society. That is why, it could inspire countless revolutionaries and freedom fighters such as Mahatma Gandhi, Swami Vivekananda, Lokamanya Tilak and others. But in times of peace and nation-building, the Gita can also inspire the politician, the teacher, the worker, the scientist and the common citizen.

Therefore, the motto of all of us today should be: Yogah Karmasu Kaushalam. What we need today is application, on a national scale, of the work-related ideology of the Gita. This will create a new work culture. And a new work culture will create a New India.

A word about the architectural beauty of the new ISKCON Temple. It is undoubtedly a worthy addition to New Delhi's array of beautiful buildings and structures—both old and new—whose number, sadly, is far less than what the nation's capital ought to have and whose collective beauty, even more sadly, is drowned under the sprawling and spreading sea of ugliness and ordinariness.

The spectacular look of this temple and its landscape reminds me of a telling quotation I came across in a newspaper yesterday. It is by the celebrated author Shri V.S. Naipaul, who commented on the paucity of beautiful modern buildings in India. Naipaul says:

"Independent India has not produced architecture. Poor

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countries need very fine buildings, to put people in touch with what is possible with the beautiful. Such fine buildings are the most public art."

Naipaul is right. We need more and more buildings which put our people in touch with our own tradition of beauty and aesthetics. Shri Naipaul is also right in observing that beautiful buildings are the most public art. We cannot tolerate a situation where everything that is beautiful—beautiful paintings, beautiful beaches, beautiful mountain resorts and beautiful works of art—is available only to those who have the money.

A beautiful temple, of course, is more than a piece of public art. It puts people in touch with the higher beauty of the Almighty Creator and all His Creation. The sights, sounds and, indeed, all the vibrations in a temple have the effect of soothing the devotees, comforting them, giving them hope and confidence and elevating them to a transcendental plane of existence—at least for the brief time we spend praying and worshipping in the temple.

May I once again felicitate all those who have had a hand in making this great dream come true—the Acharyas of ISKCON, the generous donors, the architect, the landscape designers, the engineers, workers and all other humble devotees?

### A Vigilant Press Strengthens Democracy

I AM PLEASED to be present in this historic port-city of Kozhikode today to participate in the Platinum Jubilee celebrations of *Mathrubhoomi*.

To cross the milestone of 75 years in the journey of an individual is always gratifying. But in the life of an institution, the achievement has a greater social significance. For it stands as a testimony to the character, competence, and calibre of the institution. It demonstrates the institution's ability to start a tradition of its own and maintain it and continuously enrich it.

For a newspaper to cross the Platinum Jubilee is an even more remarkable achievement in today's highly competitive media environment. *Mathrubhoomi* has done it with aplomb. In the world of journalism known for infant mortality and fierce competition, a newspaper cannot survive for decades unless it has won the respect and affection of the people and become their inner voice. *Mathrubhoomi* has indeed struck this chord. In the process, it has done not only Kerala proud but also the entire Indian media proud. On this happy occasion, therefore, I would like to heartily congratulate each and everyone associated with this achievement.

I also pay homage to the late K.P. Kesava Menon, the grand old man of both Kerala and Indian journalism. He parented *Mathrubhoomi* at a very crucial moment in the history of the country when it was almost a crime to profess nationalism. The primary object of its founders was to serve the people in achieving their rightful goal of independence. Truly, it has served the people of Kerala, as a champion of the freedom movement, as a friend of the downtrodden, as a votary of the social reforms and as a voice against injustice, lawlessness

Speech at the Platinum Jubilee Celebration of Mathrubhoomi, Kozhikode, 17 May 1998

and the repressive policies of the British Government.

Undaunted by all sorts of pressures from our colonial rulers *Mathrubhoomi* grew into one of the most widely read newspapers of the country. After independence, it continued its patriotic endeavour by contributing to the building of a new Kerala and a new India. *Mathrubhoomi* thus belongs to that exalted class of newspapers and magazines founded in the pre-independence era for which journalism was not merely a profession, much less only a business, but a mission. Almost as a rule, these newspapers and journals were started and run in conditions of crippling financial constraints. But they had the fire of nationalism in them. Naturally, they attracted young and idealistic men and women to serve their motherland through the noble profession of journalism.

As I say this, I am reminded of my own entry into public life through the route of journalism. Many years ago, I too was a part of the media. I worked as a journalist in Lucknow and Delhi. I later edited "Panchajanya", the Hindi weekly which like Mathrubhoomi, has crossed a milestone recently by completing 50 years. Having worked as a hands-on Journalist and Editor, I know the trials and tribulations and also the pride and sense of devotion to the Motherland that true journalism brings. Like you, I had deadlines, worked through late nights and used inky presses though I understand that everything is now done on computers! Your invitation to me to attend the 75th anniversary celebrations is thus a special pleasure for me.

Having been born in the thick of the nationalist movement in our motherland, it is only natural that *Mathrubhoomi* should have been so named. What is laudable, however, is the fact that never during the past so many years, has the paper lost sight of its lofty ideals of nationalism, despite its complete identification with the people of Kerala. By reporting facts correctly and by viewing issues objectively *Mathrubhoomi* has promoted high standards of media excellence. *Mathrubhoomi* has come a long way from its tri-weekly beginning. Its long journey from the days of Dandi March, to the present has seen several accomplishments. From a single edition from Kozhikode to multiple editions from Kannur, Kochi, Trichur, Kottayam CC-0. Nanaji Deshmukh Library, BJP, Jammu. Digitized by eGangotri

and Thiruvananthapuram with an exclusive edition for the Gulf, *Mathrubhoomi* has not only grown in stature, but has become an important voice of Malayalam speaking people in Kerala, India and the world. Today at the young age of 75, *Mathrubhoomi* stands tall and venerable with its commitment to the worthy causes and its power to mould public opinion.

If Kerala has the proud distinction of being the most literate state in the country, it also has the honour of having the highest per capita penetration of newspapers in India. Today Malayalam boasts of a large number of dailies, the majority of which maintain exemplary standards in the matter of editorial comments and presentation of news and views. A glance at the 125-year-old history of the Malayalam language press, reveals that it holds a high position in the language press of India. In this, your newspaper has made a sterling contribution.

May I use this occasion to share with you some of my observations and ideas on the Indian Media? My Government is committed to a free, fair and strong press. We would like the press to be an independent missionary enterprise that is not subservient to other interests. Some people tend to view information as a product that is to be tailored to suit market forces. This trend is, to my mind, not conducive to building a healthy democracy and an empowered people. New and daunting challenges face the Indian media in the fast changing national and international situation. Perhaps the biggest challenge is to make it commercially viable and profitable and yet maintain its role as a vital instrument of nation building.

Let me take the example of India's bold step to conduct nuclear tests last week. The event has created a wave of pride and joy and unity in the entire Indian society, especially because this action was taken in the face of opposition from many foreign governments. The Indian media, both print and electronic and belonging to all our languages, did a commendable job in forcefully communicating the emotions and ideas associated with this event. Yes, the whole country feels strong and self-confident today. However, the question before all of us is: how do we channelize today's emotion of national unity and self-confidence and those self-confidence and the self-confidence an

life and work, which are vital for making India economically, socially and educationally strong? Do our newspapers and magazines and TV channels have any lesser role than the Government in this endeavour? My answer is no. Indeed, this responsibility of the Indian media is almost as important as the one it carried out so spectacularly during our freedom movement.

I believe that a new perspective is needed to make newspapers, magazines and TV channels not merely commentators on a narrow spectrum of events, but also active participants in the whole process of nation-building and social change. Only then can they become true intermediaries between the Government and the people, and between different sections of society, informing, educating and influencing both. Only then, can the potential of a free and alert press be fully realized. Hence, for the well-being and strength of our democracy, I sincerely hope that this will happen. *Mathrubhoomi* reinforces that hope.

As a trail-blazer in Kerala's cultural and political life, *Mathrubhoomi* has compelled nationwide notice. In the words of Jawaharlal Nehru, "Although it is a newspaper of this region, *Mathrubhoomi* is known all over India. The role played by this famous newspaper in India's independence is extremely important. *Mathrubhoomi* has published translations of my books. Therefore, there is an author-publisher relationship too between me and *Mathrubhoomi*". Perhaps I too may have the fortune of such a relationship some day.

Before I conclude, permit me to say that it is always a pleasure for me to come to Kerala. If paradise is green, Kerala is truly Eden. The cultural life of Kerala is one of the major streams that have enriched the national clearances culture of India. To the evergreen Kerala and to *Mathrubhoomi*, I offer my good wishes. I am confident that the future of *Mathrubhoomi* and that of the media in this state is not only secure but will also flourish to influence and tell the story of India in the next millennium.

## Revealing the Hidden Wealth of Hinduism

It GIVES ME great pleasure to be here this evening to attend the contract signing ceremony for the Encyclopaedia on Hinduism. This is a monumental undertaking.

It is indeed a *Jnana Yagna*. Hence, all those who have offered their time, talent and scholarship as *aahuti* for the success of this *yagna* deserve our heartiest applause and felicitations.

Your undertaking is rightly called the "Project of the Third Millennium". I say so for two reasons.

Firstly, producing an encyclopaedia on Hinduism cannot be a one-time affair. The word for encyclopaedia in Sanskrit and in Indian languages is *Jnanakosha*. Hinduism is like *Jnana Akash Ganga*. One can never measure or fully capture it in any manner of cognition or description.

Hinduism has so countless branches and sub-branches, each having its own hoary history, and each influencing the other. Surveying them all is like studying the stars in the Milky Way. The work necessarily takes time and demands generational continuity.

Hence, the project to compile the knowledge of Hinduism in an encyclopaedia will, its seems to me, continue not only for several decades but several centuries.

But there is another reason why this project can be said to have a millennial perspective. Hinduism has entered a phase of renaissance and bids fair to emerge as one of the most attractive faiths in the coming millennium.

I invoke here the words of Dr. S. Radhakrishnan in his

Address at the contract signing ceremony for the Encyclopaedia on Hinduism, New York, 26 September 1998

book The Hindu Way of Life: "After a long winter of some centuries, we are today in one of the creative periods of Hinduism. We are beginning to look upon our ancient faith with fresh eyes."

We are living in an era of globalization. The world has shrunk to a global village. The various cultures and creeds and communities living on this planet have begun to meet and interact with one another in a thousand different new ways.

If this exchange and interaction has to continue smoothly and peacefully, we need a framework that is most tolerant, most accommodative of diversity and yet most naturally integrative.

We need a framework that is also most scientific—because the spirit of questioning and seeking is the hallmark of the modern era.

In other words, what the world of tomorrow will look for more than ever is the spirit of Hinduism.

How does Hinduism straddle the worlds of both science and faith? I can do no better than to quote the stirring words of Maharshi Aurobindo:

"Hinduism embraces both science and faith. It is the most sceptical and the most believing of all (religions)—the most sceptical because it has questioned and experimented the most, the most believing because it has the deepest experience and the most varied and positive spiritual knowledge.

"That wider Hinduism which is not a dogma or a combination of dogmas but a law of life, which is not a social framework but the spirit of a past and future social evolution, which rejects nothing but insists on testing and experiencing everything and when tested and experienced, turning it to the soul's uses, in this Hinduism we find the basis of the future world-religion."

The task, therefore, before the team that is going to produce the Encyclopaedia is to mine the immense hidden wealth of Hinduism in both science and spirituality. This is an ambitious effort—and also difficult and complex. Because, as we all know, there is much wood that is dead and diseased that has to be cleared away. In many ways, and for a number of external and internal reasons, the Hindu society has fallen from the high ideals it became known for.

The famed diversity of Hindu society sometimes gives way to internal divisiveness. Erosion in the sense of compassion and fellow feeling is another disturbing trend.

We also know how sections of Hindu society, from time to time, fall prey to intolerance and narrow-mindedness. In recent times, scholars and intellectuals have had to face the wrath of such fanaticism.

The editors of the Encyclopaedia will be called upon to exercise the highest level of objectivity, without compromising on detail or comprehensiveness. I have no doubt that the excellent team of scholars working on the project will live up to the expectations of one and all.

The success of any project depends on the vision, competence and dedication of the people who lead it and those who participate in it.

The Encyclopaedia project has at its helm scholars of the stature of Dr. Vidya Nivas Mishra, Dr. K.L. Seshagiri Rao, who are supported by as many as 1,250 researchers and writers from India and abroad. There is no parallel for such a collaborative effort involving scores of universities and institutions around the world.

The team also has the able guidance of Swami Chidanand Saraswati "Muniji" and Sant Shri Ramesh Bhai Oza.

All of them deserve our deepest appreciation for their noble undertaking.

A word about the patrons who have been supporting this necessarily expensive project. Our culture teaches us that the highest form of *daan* or donation is *jnana daan*.

Men of money may not always be in a position to do jnana daan—although in our own history there have been many CC-0. Nariaji Deshmukh Library, BJP, Jammu. Digitized by eGangotri

exceptions. But they can always do dhan daan in order for jnaanis to do jnana daan to society.

Thus, this is one of those projects where Laxmi is coming to the support of Saraswati. I join all of you in expressing our appreciation for the generosity of all those who have donated to this worthy cause.

In conclusion, I once again extend my best wishes to the Encyclopaedia project and join millions of people in India and abroad in waiting for its first volume to come out soon.

### Growth of Transport Sector Vital for Economy

I AM HIGHLY pleased to be in your midst today at the 39th World Congress of the International Transport Workers Federation. This is an important event in the annals of India's trade union movement. For it allows India to play host to the conference of a global trade union federation that represents over five million workers in more than 125 countries, belonging to every branch of transport.

At the outset, I compliment the ITF for consistently striving to improve the living and working conditions of transport workers all over the world. But the ITF has not limited its concerns only to wage issues. Since its inception in 1896, it has also raised its powerful voice in favour of social justice, women's empowerment, world peace, and equitable global development.

Address at the 39th World Congress of International Transport Workers Federation, New Delhi, 29 October 1998

In this context, I pay my tributes to Edo Fimmen, ITF's legendary general secretary between 1914-1945, who broadened the horizons of the trade union movement to harness its support for anti-colonial, anti-Nazi, and other progressive struggles around the world.

The people of my country will recall with gratitude the role played by the ITF in stopping the loading of arms meant for India when the non-violent freedom struggle under the leadership of Mahatma Gandhi was in full swing.

Transport workers are a unique and interesting constituent of the global work force. If any industry can claim to have been globalized first, it is the transport industry. Goods have been moved by land and sea ever since our human race settled in towns and urban areas.

The Indus Valley civilization clustered around river ports and the sea port of Lothal with its amazingly well-designed docks and warehouses testifies to our forefathers' zest for trade beyond India's shores. In ancient Egypt too, the Nile was the medium of transport, and later traders moved across the Mediterranean between Rome and Carthage.

Thus, international movement of goods by sea has gone on for almost as long as recorded human history. Of course, the slaves who manned the Roman galleys did not have a trade union to defend them!

Transport not only links the world, but it also connects people and places within individual nations. In India, one of the greatest contributors to national integration has been railway workers and truck drivers.

Theirs is a difficult but fascinating life. The truck driver who carries a consignment from Punjab to Tamil Nadu, or from Gujarat to Assam, spending his restful hours at a roadside dhaba away from his family and friends, is of course doing his work for his living. In the process, he weaves a beautiful fabric of national integration.

The same is true of seafarers that brave the seas for days

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and nights so that goods move from one country to another. I salute transport workers all over the world for keeping global trade and industry alive, for nothing less than the continued prosperity of all our economies depends on the work that all of you do.

But I also salute you for keeping social and cultural contacts on this planet alive, for you are a force that nurtures human civilization.

For us in India, the health of the transport sector is vital for the health of the economy as a whole. This is a highly labour-intensive sector. According to a recent survey, the transport sector accounted for 3.07 per cent of total employment as against 2.7 per cent during 1987-88.

It is a matter of national pride that the trained manpower in merchant navy, which includes about 12,000 officers and about 43,000 seamen, is sailing on Indian and foreign ships. They earn valuable foreign exchange for the country and carry Indian goodwill to far-flung corners of the world.

There is a vast scope for augmenting the number of Indian seafarers. The Government will soon start many initiatives to increase training and employment opportunities for seafarers.

Workers' empowerment and their participation in management is a principle that has gained wide currency in India. In the eleven major ports of the country, handling over 250 million tonnes of cargo, labour is associated in the management and the working of the ports closely. Each Port Trust Board has two labour representatives, who are appointed on the basis of labour union strength in the Port Trusts.

India has a fruitful interaction with the International Labour Organization (ILO) in promoting the welfare of transport workers. We are proud to be among the few countries that have actually ratified ILO's Dock Work Convention and the Occupation of Safety and Health (Dock Work) Convention.

In India, we have many laws to protect our seafarers, our stevedores, and other transport workers. However, I would be the first to agree with you that these laws needed to be CC-0. Nanaji Deshmukh Library, BJP, Jammu. Digitized by eGangotri

implemented better, and faster. We are taking measures to strengthen our implementation machinery.

The Ministry of Labour has recently reconstituted a tripartite industrial committee on road transport industry under the chairmanship of the Minister, with active participation of trade unions. The function of this committee is to study and discuss the challenges that are special to the transport sector in order to bring about a better understanding of the various problems and to render advice in this regard.

Friends, you are meeting in New Delhi at a time when global trade and economy are facing a creeping crisis. The crisis has called into question the very phenomenon—namely, globalization—that has boosted international trade, and hence transportation between nations.

There is distinct downslide in world trade and industrial output in recent years, most dramatically seen in the volatile financial markets in Asia and elsewhere. This affects workers in general, but transport workers in particular.

It is only natural, therefore, that your federation should have sharply focused on the underlying causes of this crisis. There is an urgent need for a new architecture for the global financial system, based on the principles of equitable and sustained development. My Government is in the process of formulating a conceptual framework for an innovative restructuring of the global financial system, including the twin institutions-World Bank and the IMF-that were founded to regulate it.

We will present this conceptual framework for a national debate and actively seek the views of our friends in the trade union movement.

Transport workers have a direct stake in an early resolution of the crisis in the world economy. A sustained increase in global trade will mean the movement of an ever-increasing quantity of goods across countries. This means that the demand for the work that you do at ports, airports, on ships, on trains, on trucks, and other places, will rise. CC-0. Nanaji Deshmukh Library, BJP, Jammu. Digitized by eGangotri

In order to address the imperative of economic recovery, Governments and transport unions together need to evolve solutions that both protect workers' interests and yet lead to modernization of crucial infrastructure facilities. For example, we in India need to quickly reduce the turn-around time for ships at our ports and, also, provide many facilities available at ports in competitive markets.

If we achieve modernization of port facilities, it will accelerate economic growth in many industries and services, creating many more new jobs. So, ultimately, the gainers will be workers themselves.

Retraining and upgradation of skills will have to be an important component of this exercise. Transport workers, like workers in other industries in today's fast-changing economy, need to use new cost-saving technologies and equipment, be more flexible in their work and not allow rigid job descriptions to come in their way.

In this process of change, one thing must remain unchanged: namely, concern for the welfare of workers. Governments and transport industries continue to carry a major responsibility to ensure that the physical and occupational safety of transport workers is never compromised in order to cut costs.

They can and must intervene to ensure that the environment is not harmed.

If trade and commerce in the future is going to be regulated by the global rules of the World Trade Organization, shouldn't there be global minimum standards for health and safety? Your Federation is the most apt organization to prepare a draft set of minimum standards for all your constituents. India would be happy to consider them favourably.

I know that you will be discussing these and other issues that will facilitate one of the world's oldest and most important professions to adapt to ever-faster change.

With these words, I inaugurate the World Congress of the International Transport Workers Federation.

International Transport Workers Federation.

International Transport Workers Federation.

# Basic Principles of Sikhism are Relevant Even Today

I WELCOME YOU all to this important meeting of the National Committee to celebrate the 300<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of the founding of the Khalsa. Its importance stems from the unique place the founding of the Khalsa occupies in the spiritual and national history of India.

It was at once a reaffirmation of a patriotic resolve to defend the country at any cost and also the inherent integrative, secular ethos of this land which believes in Sarva Pantha Samabhav— Equal respect for all faiths.

The order of the Khalsa is perhaps the only spiritual phenomenon in Indian history whose need arose from a strong patriotic urge. In every conceivable sense, the "Khalsa has been the sword arm of the country".

The inspiration for this was provided by Guru Tegh Bahadurji who is aptly called "Hind Di Chadar".

The Khalsa, thus, truly represents the pride, the dignity, and the sovereign spirit of India. This was once again demonstrated during the heroic battle against terrorism in Punjab, when evil attempts to rupture the communal harmony and divide the country were foiled.

The Khalsa also represents a new stage in the social reform movement in India, for it once again forcefully asserted equality of all humanity, irrespective of caste, creed, and gender.

On this occasion, I join you in paying my respectful tributes to all the great Gurus of the Khalsa. They symbolize the very best in spiritualism and national unity. The Guru Granth Sahib contains hymns from Hindu saints and Muslim sufi poets drawn from different parts of the country.

The Panj Piaras chosen by Guru Gobind Singh today convey a great message of democracy, social justice, and national integration. They came not only from different castes, but also from different states. What is more, the Guru did not place himself above the authority of the Panj Piaras.

All this shows that we are not simply celebrating a great event of the past. In the process, we are rededicating ourselves to the basic principles of the Guru, which are immensely relevant even today.

The followers of the Khalsa Panth have made an outstanding contribution to India's Freedom Movement and, after independence, to all spheres of nation-building. A large number of our Sikh brethren living and working in different parts of the world have earned a name for themselves and their motherland due to their hard work and entrepreneurship.

Friends, we have gathered here today to discuss how best to celebrate this great event in Indian history. We have received a number of good suggestions from the Punjab Government. Interesting suggestions have also come from other quarters.

The important ones among them have been mentioned in the Agenda Papers circulated to all of you. We should discuss them at this meeting. The National Committee is expected to provide guidance on the specific activities to be taken up and the monitoring of implementation committees.

I invite your views and suggestions on the Agenda Papers. Let us together finalize a plan of celebration, which will do full justice to the historic nature of the anniversary of the founding of the Khalsa.

## A Recognition of the Cause of Service to the Nation

It is with great hesitation that I rise before you to receive this award bestowed on me by the Sulabh International Social Service Organization. When I was chosen for this award, I was not the Prime Minister. Had it been announced after I assumed my present office, I would not have accepted it. For I believe it to be inappropriate for the Prime Minister to accept any award. But since a commitment had been made, I am here before you today.

I have not felt comfortable while receiving any award in my life. Every such award personalizes achievement, whereas I have grown up in a tradition where the individual is always less important than the collective and the cause for which the collective strives.

Mai nahi, tu—"not I but you, my dear colleague, deserve the credit for the good work we have done"—is the motto that has guided the activists who have grown up in this tradition.

Whatever little I have achieved in my life, which in the estimation of others qualifies me for some or the other award, has been in the service of a cause. The cause which has propelled me throughout my life, right from the day I entered public life as a student activist to now, is Service of the Nation. As far as I am concerned, the award is more a recognition of the cause and less an honour for me.

A man engaged in service ought not to seek the fruits of service for himself. As the *Gita* says.

Karmanye vaadhikaarasthe, Maa phaleshu kadachan Do your karma, unattached to the fruits it may bring.

Even when I first became the Prime Minister in 1996 and

Speech while receiving the "Honest Man of the Year" Award, New Delhi, 26 November 1998

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headed a Government that created a record of sorts—of being in office for the shortest period of time—I had stated that I am the First Servant of the Nation. My attitude is the same today.

There is a second reason for my discomfort. I am all too aware of my own many shortcomings and I shall be dishonest to myself if I did not recognize this fact. The coexistence within myself of two personalities—that of a poet-activist who dreams and struggles and a politician who has to walk on the path of pragmatism—has not been easy. So very often in day-do-day politics, the politician makes compromises that the poet-activist cannot accept.

Nevertheless, I have never given up in my chosen mission. My philosophy in politics, where honesty is a scare commodity, is summed up by the phrase:

> Na dainyam, Na palaayanam I seek neither pity nor escape from my duty.

Whatever compromises I might have made in day-do-day politics, I have the satisfaction of having done nothing for self gain or intentionally to harm anyone. In one of my poems, I have said:

अंतिम यात्रा के अवसर पर,
विदा की वेला में,
जब सबका साथ छूटने लगता है,
शरीर भी साथ नहीं देता,
तब आत्मग्लानि से मुक्त
यदि कोई हाथ उठाकर यह कह सकता है
कि उसने जीवन में जो कुछ किया,
सही समझकर किया,
किसी को जानबूझकर किया,
तो उसका अस्तित्व सार्थक है,
उसका जीवन सफल है।
उसी के लिए यह कहावत बनी है,
मन चंगा तो कठौती में गंगाजल है।

At the core of my being, I have been true to myself. I have CC-0. Nanaji Deshmukh Library, BJP, Jammu. Digitized by eGangotri

adhered to a set of values and principles even during the many decades when my colleagues and I were nowhere near the seat of power. For me power was not—is not and never will be—an end in itself. Hence, the question of sacrificing these basic values and principles for the sake of remaining in office does not arise at all.

I, therefore, accept the Sulabh International's award this morning not for myself, but as a recognition of the cause of Service to the Nation for which tens of thousands of honest social and political activists have devoted their lives. Most of them are unsung, unhonoured and even unknown outside their small circles of activity. I dedicate this award to them, knowing that I am only a medium through which their selfless service is recognized.

I wish to announce that the award money will go to the Prime Minister's Relief Fund.

Friends, honesty is a value that our society holds to be the most important. Yet, honesty is a value that is getting eroded in all walks of life, including in politics. Dishonesty in politics gets more highlighted only because politicians are always in the public eye. This sometimes creates the impression that dishonesty is the monopoly of politicians or, worse still, that all politicians are dishonest and corrupt. The press and the depiction of politicians in films reinforce this impression.

Such an impression, however, is not good for democracy. It weakens the people's faith in the institutions of democracy. There is, hence, an urgent need to restore the credibility of politics and politicians.

There is no shortcut to achieving this than to reform the political system. We must minimize the scope for confrontation and increase the spirit of cooperation, so that the space for unprincipled power struggle shrinks. We must also dismantle the edifice of corruption in governance and administration to make it harder for those who wish to turn politics into commerce.

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The focus of political reforms cannot only be on the system. The success of any system depends ultimately on the character and calibre of its leading individuals. Our scriptures say: *Uddharedatmanatmaanam*. That is, purify the soul to achieve collective development.

If the leadership—be it in politics, governance, administration or any other walk of life—is seen to be honest and above corruption, the rest of the organization naturally gets moulded in that tradition. This, indeed, was our intention when we introduced the Lok Pal Bill in Parliament, which covers even the office of the Prime Minister in its ambit.

Friends, I have so far spoken about the award. My remarks today will be incomplete if I did not also speak about those who have instituted this award and the work they are engaged in.

In a short span of a decade or so, Sulabh International has become synonymous with the cause of sanitation in India. Sulabh Shauchalaya has become the brand name for the network of public toilets. What the Government and municipal bodies could not achieve, has been done by Sulabh International.

Sanitation, too, is Service of the Nation. Improving the quality of life for every Indian includes many things like the provision of housing, educational, and medical services; job opportunities; transportation, electricity, drinking water, and sanitation. All governments, including mine, have spent a lot of time and money to improve the availability of these services according to whatever ideology that they had. However, the last one—sanitation—has never got the attention that it deserves.

It is a shame that fifty years after Independence, nearly seventy per cent of our citizens have to answer the call of nature in the open, as they do not have access to a proper sanitation system.

It is a shame that the different organizations of society—government, political parties, companies, voluntary CC-0. Nanaji Deshmukh Library, BJP, Jammu. Digitized by eGangotri

organizations, unions, and others—have not done their utmost to remove this degrading situation, and its attendant corollary—scavenging. Scavenging is a blot on our national ethos and honour. India cannot call itself developed if there is even one scavenger.

We must recognize sanitation as a fundamental right, since its absence hurts the poorest persons the most. Our sisters and mothers belonging to poorer families in cities and villages are the worst sufferers, because it is a daily transgression of their dignity and self-respect.

The United Nations' Human Development Index ranks countries according to the quality of life that they provide to their citizens. India is a lowly 139 on this index. The absence of proper sanitation is among the biggest contributor to this humiliating rank.

There are other factors too. 135 million Indians do not get basic healthcare; one out of every four Indians cannot get safe drinking water, two out of every five Indians is poor; and nearly half of our adult population is illiterate.

Improving this dismal state of affairs is the first task of any government that is truly committed to the welfare of India. It is also my Government's most important task.

The quality of every Indian's life is directly related to the growth of the economy. In the last few months, we have announced policies that will facilitate rapid and sustained long-term growth. They will increase the money available for investment in physical infrastructure.

At the same time, economic growth, by itself, will not be enough to make the live of the poorest and most powerless better. Other types of organizations, especially voluntary organizations, are needed to supplement the State's efforts.

Sanitation and improvement of public hygiene must become a national movement, led by the voluntary sector and supported by the Government. It, indeed, was an integral part CC-0. Nanaji Deshmukh Library, BJP, Jammu. Digitized by eGangotri

of our Freedom Movement. Not many people today know that Gandhiji was passionately committed to public hygiene and sanitation. Wherever he went, he emphasized this. He built many toilets himself and he directed the building of so many others. Unfortunately, after him, no other leading Indian was so passionately and publicly committed to public hygiene.

Thanks to the efforts of the Sulabh International Social Service Organization and its founder, Dr. Bindeshwar Pathak, this is no longer a subject that is ignored or considered taboo. Sulabh has used indigenous technology—and developed its own—to build many "Sulabh Shauchalyas", that also are profitable ventures. This is a unique effort that attempts to solve one of India's basic needs, by using appropriate technology for social and company profit.

Similarly, many other challenges to development can be surmounted if we use our own genius to find solutions that are anchored in India's rich social, cultural, and spiritual background.

I compliment Sulabh for its achievement in the field of sanitation, its biggest achievement being the creation of nationwide awareness about its urgency. On this occasion, I assure my Government's fullest support to this mission.

### Private Sector's Participation in Housing Vital

AM VERY pleased to be here with you all at the National Seminar on, what is a vital theme, "Housing—the Challenges and Solutions".

Shelter is a basic human need equal to food and clothing. Yet, "a roof over one's head" remains to this day a dream for many Indians. We need a housing revolution that will fulfil all our citizens' dreams. Housing is not only a basic necessity, but it also speeds up economic growth, thanks to its multiplier effect. It also has tremendous employment opportunities, and is thus important in realizing our goal of "Berozgari Hatao". That is why the National Agenda for Governance has pledged that we will facilitate the construction of an additional twenty lakh houses every year, of which seven lakh will be in cities and towns, and the rest in rural areas.

The Government has now started an ambitious programme to fulfil this commitment. I am happy to learn that this has been well received by various States, and has been successfully started in Andhra Pradesh, Karnataka, Kerala, Maharashtra and the North-Eastern States.

The Government had promised to come up with a revised and comprehensive Housing Policy at the national level. Accordingly, the National Housing and Habitat Policy has been laid before the nation. The new policy fully addresses the complex requirements of this sector, specifying clearly the role and responsibilities of various stakeholders in the process.

The policy envisages a partnership between the private and public sector in building houses. We have involved the private sector in framing this policy and I acknowledge their

Speech in an All India Seminar on "Housing—the Challenges and Solutions", New Delhi, 28 November 1998

valuable contribution to this. Completing the shortfall of 3.3 crore houses during the Ninth Plan period will cost Rs. 1,50,000 crores. The Government cannot afford to spend so much money. We need partnership between the private and public sectors to find ways of raising this money.

If the housing sector is to expand, we need to address some basic issues. These include, facilitating the hassle-free buying of land; developing and using cost-effective and environment-friendly technologies for mass housing; training construction workers to use these new techniques; making available finance at a reasonable cost; and facilitating the growth of rental housing. For too long we have depended on the Government to provide housing to people. In Delhi, for



Prime Minister Shri Atal Bihari Vajpayee lighting the lamp to inaugurate the conference on "Housing—the Challenges and Solutions", New Delhi, 28 November 1998

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example, the Government had a total monopoly of building houses. This has had negative consequences. It has led to more than half the population of the city living in unauthorized colonies, also three million people are living in slums, in totally deplorable conditions.

Every year, Delhi needs an additional one hundred thousand houses. The DDA has, however, built less than five thousand houses a year. Consequently, real estate prices and rentals have skyrocketed, making it impossible for even middle class families to afford houses. Naturally, unauthorized colonies were set up violating these laws. Those who could not afford even unauthorized colonies, set up slums. I am glad that the Urban Affairs Ministry has now ended the monopoly of the Delhi Development Authority (DDA).

We want the private sector to build most of the required houses. Land tied up in litigation, benefiting no one, should be freed and used. We want the private sector to undertake commercially viable enterprises without profiteering or unwarranted speculative gains. It should also share a part of the profit for building houses for those who cannot afford the market prices. Given adequate support, I am confident that private developers would be able to come up with one hundred thousand houses a year in Delhi. I am sure that similar initiatives in other parts of the country can produce the desired results. I urge State Governments to support the private sector in this new public-private partnership.

The Government, at all levels, should do everything to speed up various clearances required for construction of houses. Today, local bodies cause long delays in giving clearances. There is an urgent need to remove delays and to introduce transparency in clearances.

Land in big cities has always been a constraint in building more houses. My Government knows this and we are in the process of repealing the Urban Land (Ceiling and Regulation) Act. We intend to move the necessary legislation during the coming session of Parliament. Urban land ceiling has failed to achieve the pairetives for which it was first degislated. Instead

of making land available for building houses for the poor, it has locked large tracts of land in litigation. Abolishing the ULCR Act will increase the number of houses benefiting everybody, especially the poor.

The Ministry of Urban Affairs and Employment has also recently made many legal changes that will encourage housing. These include early foreclosure laws, housing-friendly rent control laws; and laws to regulate the activities of private builders. In addition, every ministry both at the Centre and at the States, should decide what they can do to encourage housing and, indirectly, economic growth. They should also ask themselves what existing bottlenecks they could remove. Promoting housing should become not just a mantra, but a karma for every ministry in the Government.

Rising construction costs have resulted in only the rich being able to afford houses with even basic amenities and facilities. The technologies available for cost-effective construction are yet to reach the needy. I am happy that the Building Centres promoted by HUDCO have quickened the transfer of technology.

Housing, by itself, is not a solution to improve the quality of life of people at large. Settlements need adequate civic support services. Sometimes houses have been completed and allotted, but remain unoccupied for want of basic services like water supply, electricity, etc. This is bad planning. We need to plan and build residential colonies that provide not only basic amenities but also income and employment generation. Inadequate planning has led to the proliferation of slums and squatter settlements which have grown alarmingly in our cities.

To accelerate rural housing, we also need to promote self-help initiatives through non-governmental and community-based initiatives for increasing housing delivery. The "Kudumbashree" programme in Kerala that I inaugurated in May is an example of how to provide houses to poor people using community-based initiatives.

The Ministry of Finance and the National Housing Bank CC-0. Nanaji Deshmukh Library, BJP, Jammu. Digitized by eGangotri

should undertake new initiatives to support the housing sector. They should increase the resources that flow into housing, and make housing loans available at rates of interest that most people can afford. In particular, poorer people and those from the informal sector of the economy should get easy housing finance.

As a start, we plan to increase HUDCO's share capital, enabling it to augment its borrowing programme. This will let it increase the funding for housing and urban development. We also want foreign investment in housing and in housing-related activities. The Urban Affairs Ministry has already come up with specific proposals that the Cabinet will be considering.

I am delighted that this national seminar is being held now, when we are about to start implementing our policy to facilitate the building of twenty lakh additional houses. I congratulate the Federation of Promoters and Builders Association of Maharashtra for their initiative in organizing this seminar in partnership with the Ministry of Urban Affairs and Employment. I wish this seminar and all its participants the best. With these words, I formally inaugurate this national seminar.

## Sikhism: Glorious History and Brilliant Future

I AM VERY pleased to be with you this evening to release this four-volume Encyclopaedia on Sikhism. Sikhism is a young religion—it is indeed the youngest among all the major religions of the world—but it embodies all the age-old values of India.

Sikhism combines the *Bhakti* and *Shakti* traditions in equal measure. In Bhakti, it celebrated the oneness of God and humanity. In the words of Guru Nanakji:

#### एको धर्म द्रिढ़े सच कोई। गुरुमत पूरा जुग-जुग सोई।

(Religion based on Truth is one, and this one religion is for the entire human race).

In Shakti, Sikhism taught its adherents the values of valour and self-sacrifice, preparing them to fight for freedom and against oppression.

The Guru tradition in Sikhism is a repository of all the precious ideas and ideals that sustain and enrich human life on earth. The very word "Guru" connotes one who leads from darkness to light. Today the light of Sikhism has radiated to all continents and corners of the world.

The very history of Sikhism is a history of national integration. The Encyclopaedia is also a mirror to the profound patriotism of the Sikh community. No other community has the honour of having produced as many martyrs for the cause of India's freedom as Sikhs. I was powerfully reminded of the struggles and sacrifices made by this community when I visited the Cellular Jail in the Andamans on New Year Day.

Address while releasing the Encyclopaedia on Sikhism, New Delhi, 5 March 1999

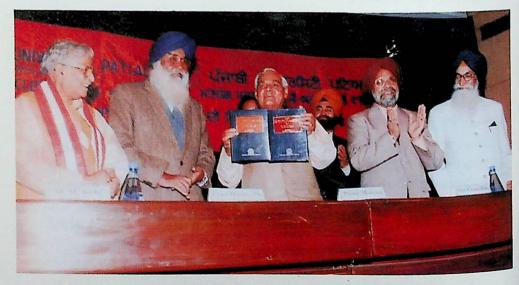
I was also reminded of the heroic deeds of the Sikh rulers when I took time out to visit Maharaja Ranjit Singh's samadhi during my recent visit to Lahore.

After Independence, our Sikh brethren have continued to serve the Motherland in many ways. They have made Punjab the granary of India. They have made great strides in industry, too. The many Sikhs living abroad are a great source of strength to India. This Encyclopedia will help in strengthening their cultural and spiritual links with India.

Like other religions, Sikhism too, is now being studied as an academic subject. However, this was being hampered by the absence of a comprehensive reference work that would satisfy both scholars and non-scholars.

I am glad that the Punjabi University at Patiala has compiled this Encyclopaedia and remedied this long-standing gap in our understanding of this great faith. Its 3,800 entries on different aspects of Sikh philosophy, religion, theology, history, architecture, art, literature and music encapsulate a vast treasure of accurate and authentic information on Sikhism.

These volumes will enlarge the knowledge of both Sikhs



Prime Minister Shri Atal Bihari Vajpayee releasing the Encyclopaedia on Sikhism, New Delhi, 5 March 1999 CC-0. Nanaji Deshmukh Library, BJP, Jammu. Digitized by eGangotri

and non-Sikhs beyond what is known about the ten Gurus, the Holy Granth Sahib, and the Sikhs' reputation as warriors and hard workers. Little-known facts about Sikh customs that have been included in it will increase the popular understanding of Sikhism.

For all this, we are truly grateful to the Punjabi University, Patiala for having done this monumental task, lasting nearly three decades. I acknowledge the leadership of the late Professor Harbans Singh, who guided this project so ably.

Sikhism is not just a faith confined to only one Indian State. It has adherents all over India and in almost every country of the world. All of them will be glad to read this Encyclopaedia.

Today is the age of the Internet, where all information is freely available to an increasing number of people. In keeping with this, may I use this occasion to suggest that this magnificent work be put on the Internet, so that the people of the world may refer to, learn from, and marvel at the glory of the Sikh faith. \*

The nation is now celebrating the three hundredth anniversary of the founding of the Khalsa. My Government has committed itself to celebrating this momentous occasion in a befitting way, both in Punjab and elsewhere.

Friends, I conclude my remarks by expressing my conviction that Sikhism not only has a glorious history, but also a brilliant future.

# PTI: An Epitome of Responsible Journalism

I EXTEND MY hearty felicitations to the Press Trust of India, which is the country's first and premier independent news agency, on completing fifty years of distinguished service to the Indian media.

In these five decades, PTI has become a household name in India. For millions of Indians, PTI spells reliability and, for the national news media, it is like a lifeline. For hundreds of newspapers in the country, particularly the smaller ones, PTI is the main source of their daily fare.

It is today not only a byword for news, but also a name associated with credible news. Credibility is the very heart and soul of a news agency or a newspaper. The credibility test is the hardest test for all those in the business of communication. By passing this *agni-pareeksha* day after day for half a century now, PTI has established itself as one of our proud national institutions.

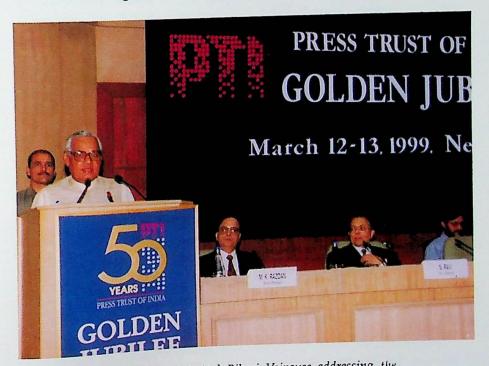
Friends, PTI's golden jubilee is no doubt a time for celebration. However, it is also an occasion for introspection and a serious look at the challenges before the Indian media, including PTI. Having been a working journalist myself around the time when PTI was in its infancy, I have witnessed the changes in the media scene in these past five decades and these changes have been breathtaking.

Information—especially, news-based information—today travels and operates in a world without frontiers. It travels instantaneously. It reaches out to a far larger section of the national and international population than ever before. With the advent of satellite television and now the Internet, even the

form of news dissemination has changed from text-alone to multimedia communication. Since information is power in today's world, they break barriers and invade cultures through their dominant position in the media.

Today, issues in the media sphere are, therefore, no longer merely about news gathering and news dissemination. They are about democracy, they are about independence of nations, and they are about survival and growth of diverse cultures around the world.

The questions before us in India are stark: Do we wish to see India with the eyes of our own news agencies, newspapers, and television channels? Do we with the rest of the world to see India, as much as possible, through the eyes of our own news agencies, newspapers, and television channels? Do we wish to see the rest of the world, as much as possible, through the eyes of our own agencies, newspapers, and television channels?



Prime Minister Shri Atal Bihari Vajpayee addressing the PTI Golden Jubilee Seminar, New Delhi, 12 March 1999 CC-0. Nanaji Deshmukh Library, BJP, Jammu. Digitized by eGangotri

If the answer to these questions is Yes, then a big responsibility comes up before all the organizations and individuals who are members of the vast family of the Indian media.

Permit me, therefore, to share with you some of my thoughts in this regard.

For all the revolutionary changes in the media in the past five decades, I believe that the underlying principles that provide sustenance and strength to the media always remain unchanged. One such principle is nationalism and national pride. The other is professionalism of the highest kind.

If PTI is today synonymous with Free India, it is because it has built its edifice on a strong foundation of nationalism and the best traditions of news agency journalism. The pioneers of PTI were great patriots and equally great professionals. I would urge the reporters, editors, managers, and all other staff of PTI, as also other Indian media organizations, to combine these two attributes in everything you do.

Secondly, for a media organization, growth is life. A news agency is a living organism, which must either live and grow, or stagnate and age. Its development is not reflected merely in the number of its employees and editors but also in how it faces and overcomes competition in today's highly demanding environment. Of particular urgency is the need to expand and improve the operations of our news agencies in Hindi and in regional languages. We cannot be happy with what we have achieved in this field so far.

I hope the PTI has adequately geared itself up to increase its reach—both in traditional news and in financial news. It is not enough that you do so only domestically. Our news agencies must become powerful players globally. Our news agencies must not only secure their turf within India, but they must also venture out to compete in foreign countries.

The reasons for the well-known weaknesses in this area should be studied dispassionately and a well thought-out strategy should be drawn up. The Government would be willing CC-0. Nanaji Deshmukh Library, BJP, Jammu. Digitized by eGangotri

to assist the PTI in the realization of this strategy without, I must emphasize, in any way diluting your autonomy or freedom.

Friends, the lead taken by India in the Information Technology sector is now widely recognized all over the world. It is a matter of pride to us that our young computer software professionals are highly sought after all over the world. Indian news agencies should not lag behind their foreign counterparts in the use of Information Technology.

The theme of your seminar prompts me to air some of my views on public broadcasting. We are on the threshold of a new millennium when knowledge and information shall be cast before the public for the asking, as never before, through a plethora of channels, radio, television, and print.

This is where public broadcasters must step in to offer the necessary national and social orientation. They should seek to bring order to the information chaos, explain the enormous social and economic changes happening around us and, above all, set high journalistic and ethical standards. In addition, they also have the task of ensuring a community spirit among the people to guarantee the participation of all citizens in the process of political, economic, and social change.

These laudable objectives cannot be achieved if maximization of commercial gain becomes the main motive for media organizations.

The major thrust of our plan relating to mass media will have to be to raise the level of people's consciousness and enrich their cultural and social life and make them better informed citizens. The media should create greater choice for the people, without shrinking the rich cultural diversity in India or in the world. We do not believe in cultural invasion, just as we are determined not to be culturally invaded. Rather, in today's world of barrier-free communication, culture can be used as an instrument of national and global integration.

I again congratulate the Press Trust of India on completing fifty years of excellent service and look forward to many more years of distinguished journalism.

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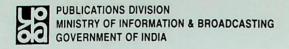
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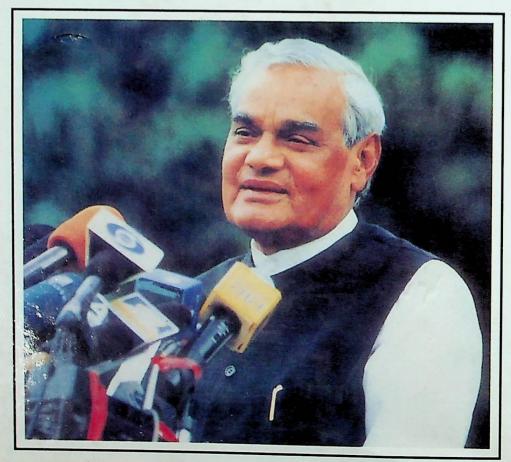
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